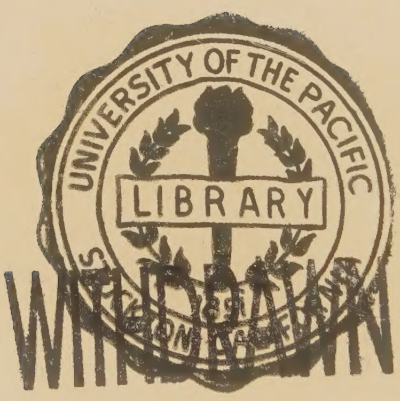
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
LIBRARY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_W9-CRY-154

THE BOSTON BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS

Boston Browning Society.

THE

BOSTON BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS

Selected to represent the Work of the Society

FROM

1886–1897

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.
1900

All rights reserved

LIBRARY
JUL 17 1969
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
202674

Copyright, 1897,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE work of the Boston Browning Society, since its organization in 1885, has been varied and continuous, and neither this volume nor the valuable Browning Library of the Society exemplifies all the modes of its activity. This volume, however, — although it cannot assume to include all or even the greater part of the essays, studies, and discussions contributed to the Sessions of the past twelve years, — may stand as generally representative, in so far as written Papers on special themes are concerned, of the range of the Society's work up to the present time. With that idea in view, as well as with the hope that this book may be of interest and service to other students and readers, it is now offered to the Public.

That the literary criticism pursued by the Society has been broad in scope as well as impartial and scholarly in quality, these papers may demonstrate to the most sceptical of those who in the past have failed to perceive the significance of the literary movement which the Society represents, and therefore have faile to appreciate the value and permanency of its results. The Boston Society has been particularly fortunate in having among its essayists a number of men and women who have attained eminence as specialists in philosophy, theology, and literature; and these have contributed to the work of the Society the effi-

ciency and weight that came from the trained eye and practised hand, as well as of a sound and broad culture. To some degree, the present volume may make this apparent in the compass of its subject-matter, covering as it does phases of Browning's art, fame, and philosophy, and in the sympathetic yet judicial nature of the criticism by which it seeks to verify the conclusions and confirm the leadings of enlightened taste.

Some few of the Papers here published have appeared in *The Andover Review*, *The New World*, *Poet-lore*, and *The American Journal of Philology*, to which magazines the thanks of the Society are due for permission to reprint them.

The copious and excellent index to this volume is the work of Miss Elizabeth May Dame.

It may be well to call attention to the fact that the arrangement of these Papers follows, in the main, the chronological order in which they were delivered.

PHILIP STAFFORD MOXOM, *President.*
GEORGE DIMMICK LATIMER, *Vice-President.*
JOSHUA KENDALL, *Chairman.*
EMMA ENDICOTT MAREAN, *Librarian.*
CHARLOTTE PORTER.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE, BOSTON BROWNING SOCIETY.

BOSTON, April 26, 1897.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

THE BIOGRAPHY OF BROWNING'S FAME 1
THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

BROWNING'S THEISM 7
JOSIAH ROYCE.

BROWNING'S ART IN MONOLOGUE 35
PERCY STICKNEY GRANT.

'CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS' 67
CHARLES GORDON AMES.

BROWNING'S THEORY OF ROMANTIC LOVE 84
GEORGE WILLIS COOKE.

BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART 99
DANIEL DORCHESTER, JR.

APPARENT FAILURE, IN REALITY ULTIMATE AND SUBSTANTIAL TRIUMPH 118
JOSHUA KENDALL.

THE UNCALCULATING SOUL 130
JENKIN LLOYD JONES.

THE VALUE OF CONTEMPORARY JUDGMENT 153
HELEN A. CLARKE.

BROWNING'S MASTERY OF RHYME 164
WILLIAM J. ROLFE.

A BROWNING MONOLOGUE 173
GEORGE DIMMICK LATIMER.

DRAMATIC MOTIVE IN 'STRAFFORD' 190
CHARLOTTE PORTER.

BROWNING AS A DRAMATIC POET 203
HENRY JONES.

PAGE

The Problem of Paracelsus 221
Josiah Royce.

'Luria' 249
John White Chadwick.

'The Return of the Druses' 264
Gamaliel Bradford, Jr.

'Mr. Sludge, the Medium' 289
Francis B. Hornbrooke.

The Optimism of Browning and Wordsworth 306
A. J. George.

'Sordello' 334
Charles Carroll Everett.

The Classical Element in Browning's Poetry 363
William Cranston Lawton.

Homer and Browning 389
Prentiss Cummings.

Balaustion's Opinion of Euripides 411
Philip Stafford Moxom.

The Greek Spirit in Shelley and Browning 438
Vida D. Scudder.

The Nature Element in Browning's Poetry 471
Emma Endicott Marean.

THE

BOSTON BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF BROWNING'S FAME.

By THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.

The remark was once made to me at a dinner party, by an unusually lively English lady who had just arrived in the United States, to the effect that all the really interesting Americans seemed to be dead. While the phrase was certainly marked by the frankness of her nation — since it is not easy to imagine a Frenchwoman as saying it, however much she might think it — yet it suggested the natural mental attitude of any foreigner visiting any country. Emerson, writing in April, 1843 (Boston *Dial*, III. 512), says regretfully, "Europe has lost ground lately. Our young men go thither in every ship, but not as in the golden days when the same tour would show the traveller the noble heads of Scott, of Mackintosh, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Cuvier and Humboldt." Yet, for those who went there thirty years later, there were the heads, quite as noble, of Carlyle, Darwin, Tennyson, Browning, Tyndall and Victor Hugo. I was one of these later visitors, and might now easily assume, from the disappearance of those notables, that all the interesting Englishmen are dead also. The London of Andrew Lang and Oscar Wilde would not seem, of itself, a formidable competitor with either of those golden periods. Were I to go once more and meet

my vivacious little companion on her native heath, there would certainly be a temptation to be as little restrained by courtesy as she was.

The interest of a foreign country lies, for visitors, largely in the fame of its authors. Yet it must be remembered that the biography of an author is not to be reckoned by the parish registers, but by the successive milestones of his fame. We know that Browning's 'Pauline' was published in 1833, his 'Paracelsus' in 1835, his 'Strafford' in 1837, his first instalment of 'Bells and Pomegranates' in 1841; but we know that for long years after this he remained practically unknown to the general public, and that this period lasted even longer in his own country than in America. We also know how complete has been the reversal worked in his case by time. Literary history can, perhaps, produce no rival to the orbit traversed between the publication of 'Pauline,' of which not a single copy was ever sold, and that occasion last year when the Boston Browning Society sent to England an order to bid $400 for a copy sold at auction, and failed because the price brought was nearly twice that sum.

It is interesting to us, as Americans, to know that the shadow began to lift from Browning's fame a little earlier in this country than in his own. It does not appear from Mr. Sharp's laborious bibliography that any one had reviewed 'Bells and Pomegranates' in England when Margaret Fuller printed her brief but warm notice of 'Pippa Passes' in the (Boston) *Dial* for April, 1843 (III. 535), although Mr. Sharp does not speak of this, but only of her collected notices of Browning in 'Papers on Literature and Art' (London, 1846). Nor does it appear that any one in England reviewed the collected poems so early as Lowell in the *North American Review*, in 1848, (LXVI. 357), except a writer in the British *Quarterly Review* the year previous. But it was true, at any rate, for both countries, that the progress of his fame was more

tardy than that of Tennyson. A few facts will make this very clear.

Lady Pollock, writing 'Macready as I knew him' in 1884, describes Macready as first reading Browning to her, thirty years earlier, and as being one of the few who had then (in 1854) learned to admire his poetry. He was disturbed to find that Lady Pollock had not read 'Paracelsus;' said once or twice "O good God!" walked up and down the room once or twice and said, "I really am quite at a loss; I cannot understand it." Lady Pollock "pleaded the claims of the babies; they left little time;" and he answered, "Hand the babies to the nurse and read 'Paracelsus.'" Then he read it to her, and she was conquered.

So slowly did the taste for Browning's poetry grow in the most cultivated circles in London that when, about 1870, Lady Amberley was in this country, and an American friend, driving her out from Newport to see Berkeley's house in that vicinity, proposed to call at Mr. Lafarge's house on the way and see the designs from Browning that he had just finished, she expressed utter indifference, saying that she and her friends in London knew and valued Mr. Browning as a man, but cared absolutely nothing for him as a poet. Lady Amberley was the daughter-in-law of Earl Russell and the daughter of Lord Stanley of Alderley; she had always been accustomed to meeting authors and artists at her father's house, and her mother was the leading promoter of Girton College. Lady Amberley herself, who was then barely twenty, was in the last degree independent in her opinions, — sufficiently so to name an infant daughter after Lucretia Mott; — but all this had not carried her beyond the point where she valued Browning as a man, but utterly ignored him as a poet.

It must be remembered, however, that it inevitably takes some time for the leading figures in literature to de-

tach themselves from the mass. A whole school of poets and poetasters was then coming forward at once, and Browning and Tennyson were both seen amid a confused crowd, including Milnes, Trench, Bailey, Alford, Faber, Aubrey de Vere, and the like; and I can recall many questionings and discussions as to the staying powers of these various competitors. There were always some who were inclined in horse-racing parlance to "back the field," and by no means to accept Tennyson, and still less Browning, as certain to win the prize of fame. Even Margaret Fuller thought 'Paracelsus' "much inferior to 'Faust' or 'Festus.'" These periods of temporary equipoise last a good while among the rival candidates for national fame, but they do not endure for ever. Fifty years ago, Italian students bought a single large volume 'I Quattro Poeti,' which placed the four recognised Italian masters on the same tableland of fame. Now the volume seems to have disappeared; Ariosto and Tasso are little more than names to readers; Petrarch has come to be a delicate delight for fastidious scholars; Italian literature means Dante. In the same way, the interest of German students was formerly balanced between Goethe and Schiller; it was hard to tell which had more admirers, though Menzel wrote a History of German Literature to show that Goethe was by far the less important figure. No one would now take this position; the Goethe literature increases in relative importance day by day, while that in relation to Schiller is comparatively stationary; indeed, Heine now takes altogether the lead of Schiller in respect to criticism and citation. As yet, however, the scales are balancing between the two great contemporary English poets, with distinct indications that Browning is destined to prevail.

I remember that Miss Anne Thackeray (afterwards Mrs. Ritchie) in London, in 1872, put the assumed superiority of Tennyson on the strongest ground I had ever heard claimed for it, by pointing out that, other things being

equal, superiority in expression must tell, and that while Tennyson equalled Browning in thought, he clearly surpassed him in form. It was Tennyson, not he, she said, who had produced gems and masterpieces. She instanced 'Tears, Idle Tears' as an example on the smaller scale and 'In Memoriam' on the larger. It has taken a quarter of a century since then to satisfy me that her first premise — equality in thought — was mistakenly assumed, so that the whole argument falls. The test of thought is time; and for myself it is applied in the following way.

I began to read the two poets at about the same period, 1841, when I was not quite eighteen, and long before the collected poems of either had been brought together. I then read them both constantly and knew by heart most of those of Tennyson, in particular, before I was twenty years old. To my amazement I now find that I can read these last but little; the charm of the versification remains, but they seem to yield me nothing new; whereas the earlier poems of Browning, 'Paracelsus,' 'Sordello,' 'Bells and Pomegranates' — to which last I was among the original subscribers — appear just as rich a mine as ever; I read them over and over, never quite reaching the end of them. In case I were going to prison and could have but one book, I should think it a calamity to have Tennyson offered me instead of Browning, simply because Browning has proved himself to possess, for me at least, so much more staying power. This is at least an intelligible test, and, to some degree, a reasonable standard; though of course much allowance is to be made for the individual point of view. The opinion of no one person is final, however much it may claim to found itself on methods of demonstration or critical principles. If it assumes more than a very limited and mainly subjective value, it always drives us back to the saying of Goncourt, "Tout discussion politique revient à ceci: je suis meilleur que vous. Tout discussion littéraire à ceci: j'ai plus de

goût que vous." Yet a mere comparison such as I have made of the judgment of the same mind at two periods of time, involves no such arrogant assumption.

Now that both Tennyson and Browning have conclusively taken their position as the foremost English poets of their period, it is interesting to remember that their whole external type and bearing represented in some degree the schools to which they respectively belonged. Tennyson, who was English through and through in habit and residence, yet looked like a picturesque Italian priest or guerilla leader; indeed, he christened Mrs. Cameron's best photograph of him "The Dirty Monk," and wrote for her, in my presence, a testimonial that he thought it best. Browning, who had lived so long in Italy that it was made a current ground of objection to his admission to Westminster Abbey, yet looked the Englishman, rather than the poet. He was perhaps best described by Madame Navarro (Mary Anderson) in her Autobiography, who says that to her surprise he did not look like a bard at all but rather "like one of our agreeable Southern gentlemen" — a phrase which, to those who know the type she meant, is strikingly recognisable in the fine photograph of him by Mrs. Myers. He perhaps painted himself, consciously or unconsciously, in the poet of his 'How it Strikes a Contemporary,' — the man who has no airs, no picturesque costume, nothing of the melodramatic, but who notes everything about him, remembers everything, and can, if needed, tell the tale. This is precisely what Walter Savage Landor had foreshadowed, fifty years before, in comparing him to Chaucer.

BROWNING'S THEISM.

By JOSIAH ROYCE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 25, 1896.]

A POET'S originality may be tested in two ways, — first, by observing the novelty of his various individual inventions; secondly, by considering the peculiar colouring that he has given to well-known and traditional ideas. For the rest, when we consider any man's originality, we commonly find that it shows itself rather more significantly in the manner than in the matter of his discourse, so that it is usually what I have just called the colouring of a man's work, rather than the material novelty of his imaginings, that concerns us when we try to comprehend his personal contribution to the world's treasures. Shakespeare wrought over earlier plays and stories; Sophocles and Æschylus re-worded ancient myths; the Homeric poems were woven out of a mass of earlier poetic narratives. Yet it was just the manner of doing this work which in each case constituted the poet's originality. Nor does one at all make light of human originality by thus calling it frequently more significant as to its manner than as to its matter. All truth concerns rather the form than the stuff of things; what we call the ideal aspect of the universe gets its very name from a word that means visible shape; and when we call truth ideal, we imply that shape is of more importance than material, and manner than mere content. The difference between man and the anthropoid apes, while it involves man's structure, is far more a difference in functions, *i. e.* in the manner in which

certain physiological processes of movement go on, than it is a difference in anatomical constitution. Amongst men, a genius may have, for all that we now know, no more brain-cells than many a very commonplace fellow. It is the manner in which these cells function that gives us the genius. Civilisation itself as a whole also turns upon recognising that "good form," as it concerns the way in which you perform your act, is often of far more dignity than is the material act itself. We also often call this way of performance, in so far as the doer himself intends it, the spirit of the act. And every one now knows that charity does not mean giving all your goods to feed the poor, nor giving your body to be burned, and that unless the spirit, the deliberate manner, the sincerely meant inner form called charity, is in your act, then, whatever you do, you are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Manner, then, is not to be despised. Wisdom, virtue, and genius are all of them largely affairs of form and manner. By manner man differs most from monkey, civilisation most from savagery, the original thinker most from the prosaic copyist, the great poet most from the weakling. On the whole, then, of the two tests just mentioned as helping us to estimate a poet's originality, the test furnished by his originality of style, of colouring, of form, of attitude, of treatment, even when he deals with very old ideas, is more likely to prove significant, in any given case, than is the easier test furnished by merely counting how many apparently unheard-of incidents, characters, or scenes he may chance to have invented.

In this essay I am to speak of an aspect of Browning's thought which had no insignificant place in determining his personal originality as a man and as a poet. This aspect concerns not any disposition on his part to invent new stories, plots, or people, but the fashion in which he treated the most familiar of religious conceptions, namely, the conception of God. I need not say that

Browning as little invented any portion of that conception of God which he possessed as he invented the conception itself in its wholeness. Nor could he invent new arguments for God's existence: for those, if such inventions were any longer possible at all after all these ages of thinking, would concern the work of the speculative thinker; and Browning is not such a thinker, but is a poet. On the other hand, what a man can render to divine things, at the present day, is not his personal aid in inventing novel notions of their nature, but his individual attitude and manner of service, of exposition, of concern for the unseen world. When a man is as original as was Browning, his attitude and manner in respect of these divine things will have its own noteworthy and original type. And it is this and this alone which we desire to study when we consider Browning's Theism.

I.

As we begin, a few words are necessary concerning the traditional conception of God, as historical conditions have defined it for the whole Christian world. The individual's way of viewing God can be estimated only when set off against the background of the current fashion of conceiving the divine nature. The word God is one of the earliest great names that we hear. The common lore concerning God is amongst the most familiar of the teachings of childhood and youth for most of us. Yet few of us ever pause to ask with any care whether this our traditional conception of God is derived from one source or from many, or whether it is a comparatively simple or an extremely complex idea. As a fact, the Christian notion of God, as the church has received, defined, and transmitted it, may be traced to at least three decidedly distinct sources, each one of which has contributed its own share to the formulation which has now become current in Christendom. The unlearned believer no longer distinguishes

the elements due to each source; but part of the very consciousness of mystery which he feels, when he tries to think what God is, results from the fact that, in forming the Christian views of God, three great streams of opinion, as it were, have met, and the bark of faith, moving about over the dark waters at the confluence of these streams, is often borne hither and thither upon eddies and varying currents of opinion, whose manifold whirlings are due to the fact that these streams, as they come together, mingle the diverse directions of their flow in a very uncertain and unequal fashion. One of the greatest problems of technical Christian theology has in fact been to reconcile the seeming contradictions of the three tendencies to which our conception of God is historically due.

The first and best known of these three tendencies is what may be called the moral view of God, or, more technically expressed, the Ethical Monotheism of the prophets of Israel. Christianity, from the very beginning, enriched this ethical monotheism, added to it a deeper colouring, by especially emphasising the doctrine of the love of God for the individual soul, and mingled with it the conception of the incarnation. But the doctrine, even as thus enlarged, is still essentially unchanged in character, and constitutes only one of our three streams of theistic opinion. As the prophets first taught the doctrine, so in essence it still remains. God is the righteous and loving ruler of the world. Ruler he is, so to speak, only as a mere expression of his perfected righteousness. His power is self-evident, and hardly needs argument. The explicit arguments of the original teachers of this faith concern in no sense the proof of God's existence, and only in a minor sense the demonstration of his power, which is everywhere assumed. What the original teachers of this faith aim to make clear is the meaning of God's righteousness, the law that embodies his will, and the genuineness of his love. Meanwhile, of his nature apart from these his ethical attributes,

both the prophets and the earliest teachers of Christianity, in so far as they were free from foreign influences, have comparatively little to say. That little we all well know. God is One, for there is no God beside him. God is personal, for only a person can will and love. He is conceived as sundered from the world that he rules; for the world contains evil, which opposes his righteous will. Moreover, he created the world, and one looks, upon occasion, as does the Psalmist, for signs of his wisdom in nature. But all these considerations centre in the one essential feature, namely, that God is righteous, and that he will prevail against evil and will love his own. Speculation as to the divine essence is in the background, and is even feared. Proof is needless. God has spoken. One has but to obey and to love. This, then, is the first tendency that has contributed to Christian theism.

But Christianity, ere it became a world-religion, had to meet the world in intellectual conflict. The world already had conceived of God, and had conceived him otherwise. Hence, in converting the world, Christianity had to mingle its primal thoughts with others. This process began very early, and the first mingling of Greek and Jewish thought had actually antedated Christianity. Accordingly, the second tendency which is represented in our modern conception of God is historically due, not to the faith of Israel, but to the philosophy of Greece, and, above all, to two thinkers, Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle himself was the first pure and explicit monotheist in the history of Greek speculation; but Plato had already contributed elements to philosophical thought which profoundly affected all the later theistic formulations, in so far as such formulations embodied the Greek tradition. The essence of the theistic doctrine that resulted from this source lies in the fact that God is conceived as the being whose wisdom, and whose rational perfection, self-possession, omniscience, and ideal fulness of intelligent and intelligible nature explain

whatever is orderly, harmonious, rational and significant in the universe. If God, for Israel, is righteousness, and in the end love, for Greek philosophy he is primarily the truth, the self-possessed mind, the source of all designs, the ideally harmonious being in whose presence all things move, because all things aim to imitate, by the lawfulness and beauty of their movements, his moveless perfection. The prophets of Israel know that God loves Israel. The Christian teachers insist that God loves the world. But in Aristotle's famous account it is rather merely the world that loves God because of his ideal perfection, while this very perfection is the assurance that God, as he is in himself, is above special concern for any finite end. In him all ends are eternally attained, and in this sense he can indeed be called the Good. But, on the other hand, this his supreme goodness stands in strong contrast to the righteousness which was attributed to God by Israel. For Israel's theism, whose Deity, although sovereign, has to war with evil and unrighteousness, appears at first, in comparison with the Greek or Aristotelian theism, as a doctrine that stains the purely ideal fulfilment of the divine life by adding the notion that God hates, loves, strives with man, pities, and finally, in the Christian view, becomes incarnate. Here was the first great difficulty in the way of Christianity when it undertook to win over the world; here was what to the Greek was foolishness in the early Christian idea of God. The church boldly met the objections of the world by undertaking, from the first, to unite the theism of Greek philosophy with her own native ethical monotheism, — to assert that both views are true, and to conceive of God at once as ideally perfect, as ethically active, and as, in Christ, sufferingly incarnate. Hence the deeply paradoxical character of the Christian theology, — a character always openly avowed, but of a nature to insure endless controversy and heresy.

But a third element entered to deepen still further the

mystery of the new faith. The Greek God of Aristotle is still in one aspect a personal God, for he not only possesses wisdom, but himself knows that he is wise. He does not strive, or war with ill, or pity his children, or die to save mankind, but he appears to be at all events self-conscious, and this character he shares with our own rational selfhood. But from the Orient, and perhaps also from sources independently Grecian, there had come still another view of the divine nature, — a view which is the parent of most forms of Pantheism. In its earliest developed shape, this view appears as the classical doctrine of the most characteristic Hindoo philosophy. According to this conception God, as he is in himself, is simply the One and only genuinely Real Being, the impersonal Atmân or Self of the Universe. The whole world of finite beings is more or less completely an illusion; for this world has not the grade of reality that God possesses. He truly is; all finite things are a vain show, — a product either of a mere imagination, or of some relatively non-essential process of emanation, or of divine overflow, whereby the all-perfect and all-real becomes the parent of a realm of shadowy half-realities, whose truth lies in him, not in themselves. Thus our third conception of God is closely linked to a denial of the substantial existence of both the natural and the moral worlds. God is conceived with such emphasis laid upon his supreme reality that one no longer says, "He rules," "He loves," "He fashions," or even "He knows," "He is conscious," — but rather, "He is, and all else is a dream." For wisdom, power, love, self-consciousness, and any form of definite personality, are predicates too human to express his inmost nature. He is above predicates, above attributes, or, as Meister Eckhart the mystic expresses it, the Godhead is "*ungewortet*," *i. e.* is above the meaning of all conceivable words.

Now this view of God's essence, derived as I have said from sources which are some of them Oriental, while

others may have been independently Grecian, is a well-known and fruitful mother of the pantheistic heresies that the church has opposed. But the Christian faith has never been willing to miss any means of exalting the divine nature. As a fact, the church actually undertook not only to oppose, but also to assimilate, this third conception, and to unite it with the others, while always condemning as heresy any too great or exclusive emphasis that might be laid upon it. The result is a well-known Christian tendency which has again and again appeared both in Catholic and in Protestant Mysticism. The reader of the 'Imitation of Christ' to-day absorbs, often unwittingly, this Oriental notion of the divine nature, even while he thinks himself dealing with the incarnation of God in Christ. As a mysterious, esoteric, and only half-conscious motive, this faith that there is no real created world at all, but rather a mere hint of God's ineffable being in whatever you feel and see, — this sense of "One and all," of God as the only reality, of the visible universe as a vain show, of life as a dream, of evil as a mere illusion, of personality as a mistake, — has actually played a large part in the Christian consciousness. In its technical doctrine the theology of the church has often deliberately tried to reconcile this view of God both with the theism of Aristotle and with the ethical monotheism of Israel. How hard the undertaking, is obvious. And yet the modern man, if a believer, is likely to feel that in each one of these views of God's nature there must be some element of truth.

These three tendencies, then, — the Ethical Monotheism of Israel enriched by the doctrine of the incarnation; the Greek Theism of Aristotle, for which God is the wise source of beauty and of rationality; the Monism of India, for which there is but one super-personal Real Being in all the world, while all else is a mere vain show, — these are the three streams of doctrine whose waters now mingle

in the vast and troubled estuary of the faith of the Christian church. It is towards the problems resulting from this mingling of ideas that the individual believer has to take his stand. And now what stand does Browning take?

II.

Browning is a poet who very frequently mentions God, and who a number of times has elaborately written concerning his nature and his relations to man. The arguments in question are frequently stated in dramatic form, and not as Browning's own utterances. Paracelsus, Caliban, David in the poem 'Saul,' both Count Guido and the Pope in 'The Ring and the Book,' Fust in the 'Parleyings,' and Ferishtah, are all permitted to expound their theology at considerable length. Karshish, Abt Vogler, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Ixion, and a number of others, define views about God which are more briefly stated, but not necessarily less comprehensible. On the other hand, there are the two poems, 'Christmas-Eve' and 'Easter-Day,' which, without abandoning the dramatic method, approach nearer to indicating, although they do *not* directly express, Browning's personal views of the theistic problem. These poems are important, although they must not be taken too literally. Finally, in 'La Saisiaz,' and in the 'Reverie' in 'Asolando,' Browning has entirely laid aside the dramatic form, and has spoken in his own person concerning his attitude towards theology. I do not pretend by this catalogue to exhaust the material for a study of Browning's theism, but as important specimens these passages may serve. As for the method of using them for the interpretation of Browning's manner of dealing with the idea of God, that method seems by no means difficult. Whether it is Browning himself or any one of his dramatic creations, whether it is Count Guido or the Pope, Caliban or Rabbi Ben Ezra, who speaks of the nature of God, the general manner of facing the problem is, on the whole,

very characteristically the same, so far as the character in question proceeds to any positive conclusion, and that however various the results reached, or the personalities dramatically presented. This manner, identical in such highly contrasted cases, at once marks itself as Browning's own manner, and it is, as already observed, a decidedly original one, not indeed as to the ideas advanced, but as to points emphasised, the doubts expressed and the general spirit manifested. The road Godwards is for Browning the same, whoever it is that wanders over that lonely path or pauses by the wayside after obtaining a distant view of the goal, or traitorously abandons the quest, or reaches at last the moment of blowing the slughorn before the Dark Tower.

In all cases the idea of God and the problem of God's nature define themselves for Browning substantially thus: First, a glance at the universe, so to speak, at once informs you that you are in presence of what Browning loves to call Power. Power is the first of Browning's two principal names for God. Now this term Power means from the start a great deal. Browning and his theologising characters, say for instance even Caliban and Count Guido, resemble Paracelsus in standing at first where at all events many men aspire at last to stand. Namely, this Power that they know as here in the world is not only One, real, and in its own measure and grade defined, so far as possible, as world-possessing, but it is so readily conceived as intelligent that, even when most sceptical and argumentative, they spend no time in labouring to prove its intelligence. The conception of mere blind nature as an independent and substantially real realm, hiding the God of Power, they hardly possess, or, if they possess such conception, a word suffices to set it aside. If, like Caliban, they work out an elaborate argument from design, as if it were necessary to prove the Creator's wisdom from his works, the argument is accompanied by a certain sense

that it has either trivial or else, like David's survey of Creation, merely illustrative value. The God of Power *is*, and he means to work his powerful will. Hence he is never a mere Unknowable, like Spencer's Absolute. That is what one simply finds. That is fact for you whenever you open your eyes. In other words, Browning makes light of all those ancient or modern views of nature, nowadays so familiar to many of us, which conceive of mechanical laws, or of blind nature-forces, as the actually given and independently real causes of all our experience. The dying John in the desert prophesies that there will hereafter come such views, but regards them as too absurd for refutation. Materialism, and other forms of pure naturalism, never became, for Browning, expressions of any definitely recognisable possibilities. Herein he strongly differs from the Tennyson of 'In Memoriam.' Equally uninteresting to Browning is Greek polytheism, whose powers are numerous, unless indeed one conceives these powers as the wiser Greeks did, and calls them mere aspects or shows of the One divine Nature. God as Power is thus in part identical with the Greek view of ὁ θεός, or of τὸ θεῖον, in so far as this divine was viewed as expressed in nature, and as only symbolised by the names of the various gods. The various gods of Greek polytheism have special interest to Browning only in so far as they reveal the other aspect of the divine nature, namely, the divine Love, as Pan revealed his disinterested love for Athens to Pheidippides, or else in so far as they are mere individual persons in a dramatic story.

In this conception of the God as Power, revealed as a perfectly obvious and universal fact, Browning combines, in an undefined way, that Aristotelian notion of God as the intelligent source of the world-order and that relatively Oriental faith in the One Reality, which we have already seen as factors in our Christian idea of God. For our poet, God as Power is One and is Real. Our knowl-

edge that he is so is direct, is a matter almost of sense, and needs no special proof. Like Xenophanes, the early Greek monist, Browning simply "looks abroad over the whole" (for so Aristotle phrases the matter in the case of Xenophanes) and says, "It is One." This knowledge is a sort of easy and swift reflex action, on the poet's part, in presence of the physical universe. The directness of the insight resembles that of the mystics; but this is not, like theirs, as yet a comforting insight. For the God of mere Power is no humanly acceptable God. Meanwhile Browning, who so easily individualises when he comes to the world of men, very readily sees all natural objects as mere cases or symbols of the universal Power; and so, whenever he theologises, the natural objects quickly lose their individuality and lapse into unity as manifestations of the one Power, even while one continues, like David, to dwell upon their various beauties with enthusiastic detail. As we shall soon see, there does indeed arise a contradictory sort of variety and disharmony within the world of the One Power, but this is an inevitable afterthought. One means to view Power as One. So far then, our poet seems a Monist of almost Oriental swiftness in identifying everything with his One Power. The Pope, in 'The Ring and the Book,' does indeed give the argument from Power a somewhat Aristotelian definiteness of development, as a sort of design-argument: but the Pope is a technical theologian; and, for the rest, his restatement of the Aristotelian argument for God is cut as short as possible. The manifold and occult wisdom that Paracelsus seeks, as he runs about the world in search of strange facts, is not meant to prove, but to illustrate and apply, with restless empirical curiosity, the wonders of the divine unity. The designs, the exhaustless ingenuity, of the God of Power "obtain praise," as the 'Reverie' in 'Asolando' points out, from our reason, from the knowledge within us: but it is plainly not thus that we gradually acquire the notion of

God; but it is rather thus that we merely exemplify, variegate, and refresh our direct sense that God is almighty.

As for the directness of Browning's insight into the presence of Power, this may readily be shown by quotations. 'La Saisiaz' is to be a poem of explicit reasoning: —

> Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can but guess —
> "Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self, no or yes?"

The poet thus resolves to get definite mental clearness. But the first answer to his questions is a fair instance of the absolutely direct argument concerning Power: —

> I have questioned, and am answered. Question, answer presuppose
> Two points: that the thing itself which questions, answers, — *is* it knows;
> As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself, — a force
> Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its course,
> Unaffected by its end, — that this thing likewise needs must be;
> Call this — God, then, call that — soul, and both — the only facts for me.
> Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such:
> Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact as much.

In the 'Reverie' in 'Asolando' the soul, after its early and brief "surview of things," learns to say: —

> Thus much is clear,
> Doubt annulled thus much: I know.
>
> All is effect of cause:
> As it would, has willed and done
> Power: and my mind's applause
> Goes, passing laws each one,
> To Omnipotence, lord of laws.

To "pass" the laws of the physical world in this ready way — *i. e.* to make little of any study of the interposing nature, and to go direct to the highest in the realm of Power is very characteristic of this aspect of Browning's reasoning. It is in this fashion too, namely, by very quickly passing from one stage to a higher, that the Pope abbreviates his version of the argument for the divine wisdom. To be sure, Bishop Blougram, in his assumption of extreme scepticism, has to declare that "creation's

meant to hide" God "all it can." But even in his case, not natural law, but natural evil, is the veil that hides God. And he too admits that

> The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
> Feels God a moment.

It is, therefore, not the brutishness of Caliban, but the very essence of the argument from the fact of Power, that leads Caliban to begin his theology with the directly stated thesis:

> 'Thinketh He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

One has not first to prove that Setebos exists. The only question for Caliban is as to where his lair is. On the other hand, far higher in the scale of being, the sense that the universe consists just of man and of this God of power may come over the soul of a sufferer with a pang all the keener because this sense of God's mercilessly potent presence is so direct. The love-forsaken heroine of the lyric 'In a Year' closes with words whose sense the foregoing considerations may serve to make plainer:

> Well, this cold clay clod
> Was man's heart:
> Crumble it, and what comes next?
> Is it God?

God and the heart, we see, are the two and sole realities; crumble one, and only the other is left you.

I do not know that anywhere the otherwise so argumentative poet throws much fuller light upon this fashion of making clear God's existence. What Power does, many of Browning's characters very elaborately describe, according to their lights; but that the one Power exists, needs for Browning no fuller proof than the foregoing. Browning apparently is not, at any rate consciously, a Berkeleyan idealist, yet for him the existence of the God of Power is not only as sure as is the existence of one's own self, but is surer, and apparently more real, than is the

existence of what we call the outer world, *i. e.* the world of nature.

The young Browning, for the rest, was partly under Platonic influence in regard to the definition of the world of Power. This influence appears in 'Pauline' and in 'Paracelsus.' But the influence was hardly that of a technical interest in Plato, and the neo-Platonic pantheism attributed to Paracelsus is transformed into a highly modern and romantic rhapsody, conceived after Renaissance models, but much in Schelling's spirit. The Greeks had first found their natural world real, beautiful, and mysterious, as well as obviously embraced within the unity of the celestial spheres. Hence the thoughtful Greek finally reasoned, but by slowly attained successive stages, that the world is both one and divine. His Gods gradually blended in the abstraction called τὸ θεῖον; his philosophical theories of nature slowly lost their early materialism; and thence he passed, next, to Plato's world of the eternal ideas, then to Aristotle's monotheism. But in Browning's view of the universe of power this whole Hellenic process is condensed, as it were, to a point, and blended with the monistic tendency that came into Christianity, through Neo-Platonism, from the East. Nature, for Browning's view, is swiftly surveyed, and seen to be wise and beautiful. Then nature is referred to one principle, — God as Power. This reference is an immediate intuition. Hereupon God as Power seems actually to absorb the very being of the natural world, and the result is so far pantheistic. The individual Self that observes all this remains, to be sure, still unabsorbed and problematic.

But now, in strong contrast to this first aspect of Browning's Theism, is a second aspect, and one which forms the topic of our poet's most elaborate reasoning processes. God as Power is grasped by an intuition. There is, however, another intuition, namely, that God

is Love. This latter intuition, taken by itself, Browning can as little prove as the foregoing. What it means, we have yet to see. But its presence in the poet's mind introduces a new aspect of his doctrine. The difficulty, namely, that here appears, is the one which taxes every power of his reflection. The difficulty is: How can the God of Power be *also* the God of Love? Neither of the intuitions can be proved; neither is a topic of more than the most summary reasoning process. But the relation between the two intuitions is a matter worthy of the most extensive and considerate study. Moreover, to Browning's mind, herein lies the heart of our human interest in divine matters. Hence dramatic portrayals of even the basest efforts to make the transition in thought from the God of Power to the God of Love; even the dimmest movings of the human spirit in its search for the conception of the God of Love, — all these will be, in Browning's view, of fascinating interest.

But now what, from Browning's point of view, does one mean by speaking of God as Love? As I once tried to point out,[1] Browning uses the word Love, in his more metaphysical passages, in a very pregnant and at the same time in a very inclusive sense, — almost, one might say, as a technical term. Love, as he here employs it, includes indeed the tenderer affections, but is in no wise limited to them. Love, in its most general use, means for Browning, very much as for Swedenborg, the affection that any being has towards what that creature takes to be his own good. Paracelsus, in his dying confession, declares: —

> In my own heart love had not been made wise
> To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
> To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
> To see a good in evil, and a hope
> In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
> Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim

[1] In 'The Problem of Paracelsus,' p. 224.

> Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
> Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
> All with a touch of nobleness, despite
> Their error, upward tending all though weak,
> Like plants in mines, which never saw the sun,
> But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
> And do their best to climb and get to him.

In brief, then, the totality of human concerns, on their positive side, all passion, all human life, in so far as these tend towards growth, expansion, increasing intensity and ideality, — all these, however base their expressions may now seem, constitute, in us mortals, Love. Stress is laid, of course, upon this expanding, this positive and ideal tendency of love. This is the *differentia* of love amongst the affections. Content, sloth, indolence, hesitancy, even where these are conventionally moral states, as in 'The Statue and the Bust,' are cases of what is not love. Strenuousness, however, even when its object is the theory of the Greek particles, is, as in 'The Grammarian's Funeral,' an admirable case of love. Ixion loves, even in the midst of his wrath and anguish: —

> Pallid birth of my pain, — where light, where light is, aspiring
> Thither I rise, whilst thou — Zeus, keep the godship and sink!

If this then, in man, is love, what must it mean to say that God is Love? It must mean first, that there is something in God that corresponds to every one of these aspirations of the creature. Now this, to be sure, is so far what even Aristotle had in one sense said. For Aristotle declares that the world loves God, and that the world is thus moved to imitate — every finite being in its own measure — God's perfection. But, in Aristotle's conception, it is the world that loves; God is the Beloved. But now Browning plainly means more than this. He means that to every affection of the creature, in so far as it aims upwards, towards greater intensity and ideality, there is something in God that not only corresponds, but directly responds: —

> Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

God's love for us, if it exists, must thus have not merely to aim at some distant perfection and heavenly bliss for us, but to find in our very blindness, suffering, weakness, inefficiency, — yes, even in our very faultiness, so far as it involves a striving upwards, — something that he met with appreciation, sympathy, care, and praise, as being love's "faint beginning" in us. God's love, in Browning's mind, does not mean merely or even mainly his tenderness or pity for us, or his desire to see us happy in his own arbitrarily appointed way, but his delight in our very oddities, in the very narrowness of our ardent individuality. It means his sharing of our very weaknesses, his sympathy with even our low views of himself, so long as all these things mean our growing like the plant in the mine that has never seen the light. If God views our lives in this way, then, and only then, does he love us. He must love us, at the very least, as the artist loves his creations, heartily, open-mindedly, joyously, not because we are all fashioned in one abstract image, but because in our manifoldness we all together reflect something of the wealth of life in which he abounds. This is the view of Aprile, never later abandoned by Browning.

Here, I take it, we have indicated the core of Browning's doctrine of the divine Love. But now how is this doctrine related to that of Christianity? The notion of God as Power was, we saw, a summary and blending of that Greek monotheism and Oriental pantheism which have always contributed their share to the theism of the Christian church. Browning's doctrine of God as Love, on the other hand, brings him, of course, into intimate contact with the remaining aspect of Christian theism, or with the more

central and original portion of the faith of the church. Yet here, as appears of this central and original portion of Christian faith, only one article immediately and personally appealed to Browning himself. This article he selects from tradition for repeated and insistent illustration, at periods very remote from one another in his life. It is the doctrine of the Incarnation. God, according to the Christian faith, became man. To the significance of this doctrine, as Browning viewed it, the dying Aprile (in the second version of the 'Paracelsus'), David, Karshish, and Ferishtah all bear a witness, that is conceived by the poet as coming from the hearts of men who are *not* under the spell of the faith of the church itself. The dying John in the desert, the Pope in his meditation, give the same tale its more orthodox form: yet neither of these is merely reporting a tradition; each is giving the personal witness of a soul. Speaking more obviously in his own person, or at least under thinner dramatic disguises, the poet more than once returns to the topic. About this point long arguments cluster. It is an ineffable mystery. Could it be true? The poet very noteworthily loves to view this article of faith as if from without, as Karshish or as Ferishtah has to view it, — as an hypothesis, as something that might some time occur. Browning himself regards with an unpersuaded interest the historical arguments *pro* and *con* as to the authenticity of the Gospel narrative. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the incarnation has small connection, in his mind, with the other articles with which the faith of the church has joined it. The atonement, the death on the cross, have at all events a very much smaller personal interest for the poet, although they are mentioned in the two poems, 'Christmas-Eve' and 'Easter-Day.' But it is the reported fact of the incarnation over which he wonders and is fain to be clear. Why this intense concern of an essentially independent intellect, which mere tradition, as such, could never convince? For Browning was certainly no orthodox believer.

The answer is plain. The truth of the doctrine of the incarnation, if ever it became or becomes true, must lie in its revelation of a universal and transcendently significant aspect of God's nature, — namely, the human aspect. God, the All-Great, if he is or can become human, is thereby shown to be the All-Loving too. Then one can see that he really *does* and so *can* contain an attribute that qualifies him to see the meaning of our every imperfection, and to respond to our blindest love with love of his own. To say God is Love is, then, the same as to say God is, or has been, or will be incarnate, perhaps once, perhaps — for so Browning's always monistic intuitions about the relation of God and the world suggest to him — perhaps always, perhaps in all our life, perhaps in all men.

So far, then, Browning's general attitude towards the manifold traditions of the Christian faith. So far his contrast between God as Power and God as Love. So far too his interest in what, if completely believed, would for him be the doctrine that would reconcile God as Power with God as Love.

III.

Let us turn next to a more special aspect of the conflict which these two conceptions of God undergo in the various cases where they are dramatically represented.

People who conceive God almost exclusively as Power are in Browning's account, in general, beings of a lower mental or moral grade. Such is the intolerant believer with whom Ferishtah argues in 'The Sun.' Such, more markedly still, are Count Guido and Caliban. On the other hand, sufferers in general, like Ixion, have of course this aspect of the divine nature emphasised in their experience, and are in so far pathetically blinded, unless, like Ixion, they escape from blindness by a supreme act of faith. The Greek, on the whole, also had to conceive of God merely as what Browning would call Power. But on this side Browning, as before pointed out, does not sympa-

thise with the Greek. Browning prefers Euripides, partly because the latter had gone distinctly beyond what Browning would call mere power in his conception of the moral world, although he had not yet quite reached the Christian conception of the divine love. But now, as Browning portrays the thoughts of those who are disposed to exclude the conception of God as Love, there is one very noteworthy feature about certain of their arguments which, so far as I know, has escaped general notice. This feature lies in the fact that the God of Power, even before we learn quite positively to conceive him as the God of Love, sometimes appears to us, despite his all-real Oneness, as somehow requiring another and higher if much dimmer God beyond him, either to explain his existence or to justify his being. This contradictory and restless search for a God beyond God, this looking for a reality higher still than our highest already defined power, appears in several cases, in our poet's work, as a sort of inner disease, about the very conception of the God of Power, and as the beginning of the newer and nobler faith. The God beyond God is in the end what gets defined for us as the God of Love. The World of Power, despite all the monistic intuition, is inwardly divided, is essentially incomplete, sends us looking further and further beyond, until, as to David so to us, it occurs that what we are looking for is just the weakness in strength that the God who loves us face to face, as man appreciates man, would display.

The general idea of the God beyond God has considerable common human interest, quite outside of Browning. We find traces of such conceptions in many mythologies, in child life, and in the ideas even of some very unimaginative people. A writer on English country parish life narrated a few years since a story, according to which a clergyman, who had frequently condoled in a formal way with a steadily unfortunate farmer amongst his parishioners, and who had often referred in this connection to

the mysterious ways of Providence, was one day shocked by the farmer's outburst: "Yes, I well know it was Providence spoiled my crops. It was Providence did this and did that. I hate Providence. But there 's One above that 'll see it all righted for me yet." This is an example of the Over-God.

Well, the God beyond God appears in Caliban's theology, very explicitly, as "the something over Setebos that made him, or he, maybe, found and fought." "There may be something quiet o'er his head." Caliban at one point develops the idea until it degrades Setebos to a relatively low rank; but thereupon he finds the attributes of "The Quiet" unworkably lofty, and devotes the rest of his ingenuity to Setebos. In far nobler form, Ixion rises from Zeus to the higher law and life beyond him. I have already mentioned David's use of a similar process in his gradual rise towards his wonderful climax. On the other hand, and for very obvious reasons, Augustus Cæsar in the poem in 'Asolando,' while he is celebrated by his flatterers and subjects not only as already the God of Power, but also as the proper dethroner of Jove, lives in the shadow of the fear of the Over-God that may any day make worm's meat of him. And meanwhile, Augustus reigning, Christ is born. John, dying in the desert, prophesies that in future, just because of this general problem of might beyond might, some will arise who will say that there is no Power at all in the universe, but only natural law. Both John and the poet obviously, as we saw, make light of this way of escape. The true significance of the striving beyond the God of Power is its tendency to bring us into the presence of the God of Love. I do not know whether it has often been consciously observed that herein lies at least part of the incomparable irony of that thrilling closing line of Count Guido's last speech. Guido has already fully explained his theology to the death-watch about him, stating, to be sure, a not altogether harmonious

system of opinion. At one point he believes in a certain Jove Ægiochus, the ægis-bearer, as the one highest power — a belief not inconsistent, he says, with a reasonable polytheism. One needs powers beyond powers, for various reasons. The main concern for this dying wretch is to find out who is really the highest power in the universe, since he himself is badly in need of help. In a fashion that even in its ghastly burlesque, after all, suggests by its form the radiant flight of David through the glorious world of the higher powers, Guido now flees, but through his own bosom's hell, seeking for a power that one can somehow rest upon. He meets face to face more than once the God of his church, — a power more unacceptable and incomprehensible to him than the others. Hereupon he elaborately defies all Power. He has never taken the Pope for God. In heaven he never will take God for the Pope. But in vain: he falls helpless at last, and, even while he wrestles beneath hell's most overwhelming might, still, like Ixion, like Karshish, and like David, he conceives at last the Over-God, afar off, beyond the great gulf fixed; and this Over-God, mentioned in his final cry for help after all the powers, — after Grand Duke, Pope, Cardinal, Christ, Maria, God, — is Pompilia. At last, even from the depths of hell, even in the chaos of error, one has thus conceived of the God of Love, and thus Guido, too, learns the deeper meaning of the Incarnation. His cry is as heretical as the irony of his fate is bitter, but he at least has called on the name of what is beyond Power.

It is interesting to glance at the corresponding process occurring in a purely Grecian setting. I have already mentioned Euripides, as Browning viewed his position. Euripides, as exhibited in the Pope's statement of his faith, fails in some respects to conform to Browning's own categories; for our poet is here portraying an independent historical personality, whose way of approaching the ulti-

mate problems is not precisely his own. But still the general parallelism is obvious. Euripides, so the Pope here tells us, recognises Nature as the world of power. Nature, for Euripides, has unity, and somehow imparts this unity of the Eternal and the Divine to the doubtful and manifold world of the gods beneath. The gods, as symbols of this power, to which they have relations to us quite mysterious, are deserving of awe "because of power." Yet, on the other hand, man knows, through the witness of his own heart, a truth whose warrant is superior to that of this whole world of powers. "I," says Euripides, in this dramatic statement of his case, —

> I, untouched by one adverse circumstance,
> Adopted virtue for my rule of life,
> Waived all reward, loved but for loving's sake,
> And what my heart taught me, I taught the world.

This consciousness of the supremacy of virtue raises Euripides to the world where love is above power:

> Therefore, what gods do, man may criticise,
> Applaud, condemn, — how should he fear the truth ?
> . . . . . .
> Thus, bold
> Yet self-mistrusting, should man bear himself,
> Most assured on what now concerns him most —
> The law of his own life, the path he prints, —
> Which law is virtue and not vice, I say, —
> And least inquisitive where search least skills,
> I' the nature we best give the clouds to keep.

Euripides, too, in his way, then, found the Over-God, and found him in the world of love, beyond nature, and yet within man's heart. It is this quality which Browning finds in Euripides, this beginning of a conquest of the realm of power in the interest of man, and in the quest for love that makes Euripides, in our poet's eyes, the chief of the Greek tragedians. Balaustion, at the close of her first adventure, retells, in this sense, the Alkestis legend. The conquest of death, the power of powers, by love simply as love, and not by any might, — this, Balaus-

tion tells us, is the deeper ideal that Euripides has awakened in her own heart. In her narrative the death-goddess herself recognises the Over-God in the person of Alkestis. This is the poem that Euripides meant, even if he could not quite make it. But the ideal story of the Alkestis, thus retold, comes very near in its significance to the tale that arouses the insistent wonder of Karshish. The raising from the dead of Alkestis or of Lazarus, — what matters the name of the tale, so long as it arouses afresh the thought to which the doctrine of the incarnation bears witness, the thought that, if ever we pierce through the world of Power to the heart of it, to that which is beyond Power, we find, as the Over-God, Love?

IV.

Such then, for Browning, the inner process whereby we pass from the conception of Power to that of Love. Some inherent restlessness forbids the partisans of Power to remain in their own realm. Their souls are always discontent with their own conceptions. They are themselves lovers, and to seek the sun is their destiny.

But the fully awakened lover, who conceives God as Love, is now, after all, in presence of his hardest trial. For if the God of Power has been thus always transformed into the God of Love, the God of Love remains responsible for all the horrors of the world of Power. The problem of evil looms up before one, the dark tower at the end of this long quest. What has the poet to say of this problem? How reconcile Love with Power in the world as we know it?

Already, in stating the meaning that Love has for Browning, we have indicated that love, which is so complex and paradoxical a thing, involves, from our poet's point of view, very much more than mere benevolence. In Shelley's 'Prometheus,' the war of Love and Power is depicted in terms such as in some wise appeal to Browning.

as he himself has told us. But love, in Shelley's mind, means pure kindliness, benevolence, mutual toleration and a fondness for lovely objects. And so Shelley's only solution of the problem of Evil is simply that Eternal Love has unaccountably absented himself from the present world, leaving there, as reigning monarch, the Power-tyrant Zeus. Why love has done this is an absolutely inexplicable and capricious mystery. Some day, in an equally capricious fashion, Eternal Love is to return, and then, by a single magical act, he will hurl the tyrant headlong into the abyss. Henceforth the stars will sing, and Prometheus and the ladies will weave flowers and tell stories, and they all will live happy ever after. This is the essentially trivial thought that Shelley makes explicit in a poem whose wonderful beauty and true significance really depend upon something of which Shelley was unconscious, — namely, upon the eternal fact, richly though unconsciously illustrated by Shelley, that the world of the sufferingly heroic Prometheus Bound, the unconquerable lover, is actually far more significant and noble, despite Zeus the accursed, than is the later world of Prometheus the Loosed, as Shelley himself pictures it; namely, the world free from Zeus and devoted to agreeable society and to flowers, but with nothing whatever in it for one to do save to be petted, admired, and caressingly encouraged to tell Asia and Panthea how once upon a time one used to be a hero. The true moral of Shelley's 'Prometheus' is that, in an ideal world of Love, we can indeed well get on without tyrants, but that we cannot get on without heroes, who must, as heroes, not only love but suffer; not only sing but endure; not only be kindly but be strenuous: not only wear flowers, but bear on their brows, upon occasion, the cold sweat of an anguish freely accepted for cause.

Now it is just this strenuous aspect of the significant life of love that Browning always consciously sees. Hence,

when he tries to reconcile the world of Power with the world of Love, he does not, like Shelley, picture a solution in terms of mere benevolence and jollity. Both benevolence and jollity he praises, but they do not make the whole of Love. Love includes strenuousness; therefore the human lover must be often far from his goal, embarked on a dark quest, and so at war with Power. Love means triumph amid suffering, and so the fifty and more 'Men and Women' must illustrate love's griefs and blindness quite as much as love's attainment. For the lover of the two lyrics, 'Love in a Life' and 'Life in a Love,' the very power that holds him away from his beloved is consciously recognised as at one with the spirit of his love; for, as he declares, endless pursuit is the only conceivable form of endless attainment. If these things are so, then even the divine love itself must need for its fulfilment these struggles, paradoxes, estrangements, pursuits, mistakes, failures, dark hours, sins, hopes, and horrors of the world of human passion in which, according to our poet, the divine is incarnate. Perfect love includes and means the very experience of suffering, and of powers that oppose love's aims. Herein may — yes, must — lie the solution of the problem of Evil.

This general doctrine, for which our author's whole range of lyric poetry furnishes the illustration, is given an expressly theological turn, as suggesting the true and general reconciliation of the worlds of Love and Power, in a number of places. It is this view, as a justification of the ills of the world, that is stated by Abt Vogler, who prefers the musical metaphors known already to the Greek Heraclitus, and who declares that discord is essential to a perfect series of harmonies, and that the whole may be perfect even where the parts are evil. Rabbi Ben Ezra employs other figures, but expresses the same intuition. The poet himself is never content with the present life as showing us the sufficient solution of the problem; but he sees, in

the world as it is, enough of love's faint beginnings in mankind to be sure that with more life more light would come, until we learned of God's love, not by getting rid of the world of dark Power, but by seeing in Power, as the opponent of Love, the source of that element of conflict, of paradox, of suffering, and of ignorance, without which Love — Love that is heroic in conflict, earnest with problems, patient in suffering, and faithful amidst doubts — could never possess the fulness of the divine life. That divine life, completed in God, incarnate in man, is much hidden from us by death, but is somewhere fully seen as good, when viewed in the light of the attainment and wholeness of the external world.

This appears to be Browning's theistic faith, — never a philosophy, always an intuition, but freely illustrated from experience, and insistently pondered through long and manifold arguments. By this faith he met, in his own way, the problems set before him not only by life, but by that extremely complex product of tradition, the Christian conception of God.

BROWNING'S ART IN MONOLOGUE.

By PERCY STICKNEY GRANT.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, November 25, 1891.]

THE most splendid tomb in the world is probably the Taj, erected by a Mogul emperor as the burial-place of his favourite wife. Made wholly of white marble, which in India retains the quarried brilliancy, it is more magnificent than the cathedral of Milan, and is properly considered the perfection of Indian architecture. A noble gateway admits the visitor to a carriage path running between low, Moorish arched buildings, at the end of which rises a second gateway surmounted by little domes, by itself beautiful enough to be a memorable monument. Continuing along a marble pavement through tropical foliage, one sees ahead the dome of the Taj resting apparently upon dense verdure. At length, a succession of marble terraces leads to a platform upon which the whole structure rests. Within the temple, beneath the dome, is a circular marble screen, carved in delicate tracery and studded with conspicuous gems. Enclosed by the screen is a sarcophagus on which is cut an inscription in Arabic. The name of the lady buried here is Moomtaz Mahal.

I hope it is not due only to the fascination of the oriental picture that I see in it a helpful image of the poetic edifice raised by Robert Browning. The reader passes through the gateway of 'Paracelsus,' sees a few poems on his way to the second gateway, 'Sordello,' then treads a path flagged with drama and lyrics until he

reaches a great structure, 'The Ring and the Book,' in which is enshrined Pompilia, the poet's loveliest creation.

A traveller toward the Taj may from a distant hill catch sight of his goal and discover the arrangement of the whole, then plunge into the valley and proceed for a time before the marble portals of the first gateway appear in front of him. Let us leave our broad glance at Browning's poetry and approach it by a somewhat hidden path.

Browning is a most prolific writer, and his admirers, remembering, perhaps, that imitation is the sincerest flattery, have likewise become prolific writers. Consequently Browning and his commentators by themselves form a small library, and this bulk is being constantly increased. An essayist would be presuming as well as unwise who attempted to treat more than a small and well-defined portion of a subject that has been so fully discussed.

Let us attempt a short study of Browning's art in monologue, a neglected field, and one that will repay investigation because it is his style more than his matter that discourages readers who open his pages for the first time. The form rather than the substance of Browning's poetry will be our concern — the growth of the poet's mastery over his material. In doing this we shall necessarily deal a little with the character of the material which the poet wished to embody. Before we begin a close examination of his work, however, let us consider for a moment the man himself.

Robert Browning, the poet, club-man, scholar, theologian, is in the first place thoroughly a being of the nineteenth century. Any one familiar merely with the titles of his poems might suppose his sympathies were entirely with the past, especially with mediæval life; but such is not the case. Every fibre of his mind is strained over nineteenth century problems, and no matter what the scene or the time, or the system of philosophy he chooses to wrap around his subjects, at the centre is a question of to-day. Indeed, it may be said that what Browning is as a thinker,

the age has made him. Let us bring before our minds the master spirits of two widely separate periods. In one group stand Sir Philip Sidney, Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth, Bacon, Spenser, Shakespeare; in the other Turgenieff, George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Carlyle, Newman. A light seems to shine around the first, while our own great ones stand in a shadow weighed down with thought. Seriousness is the "note" of the passing generation. It has witnessed the moral agitations that led to the emancipation of the Russian serf and negro slaves. It has seen a world-wide organisation aim to cure the ravages of drunkenness, and a peaceful army arise for saving men, body and soul. Ethics temper even the mechanical laws of political economy. To-day we look at the moral side of a question and neglect the others; we must understand how a fact will affect our lives before we accept it. Art and science petition the individual to listen to their claims. "Here is my Prime Minister, Life," replies the man; "he will read your suit and report to me his opinion of its value." Ethics, not metaphysics, is with us the popular form of philosophy. The studies that explain the relations of life are the ones now most esteemed. In Herbert Spencer's phrase we exclaim, "How to live, that is the essential question for us." What is art or science to me if it cannot teach me how to live? To contemplate, even to create beauty does not satisfy me. I must know what life means, then absorb all beauty and all knowledge into myself. Nothing is of any account, except as it helps me to be, except as it develops my soul. The world talks in such fashion to-day to those who would gain its ear. Its favourites are poet-painters, like Millet and Corot, philosophers who deal with social problems, novelists who moralise, like Thackeray and George Eliot, poets who preach, like Wordsworth. All the great men of the age, one might say, have accepted chairs of ethics, and have agreed from some point or other to approach and

expound that great subject. Goethe, with his calm plan of self-culture which nothing interrupted, could not have been produced in this century. We demand that our leaders shall forget themselves and be of practical use to us. Many of our spiritual benefactors have a talent for verse that would have blossomed under Elizabeth: Thackeray, Dickens, Newman, Carlyle, George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, Emerson.

The men just named thought they could best help the world by talking to it in prose rather than in verse, although they loved verse. Robert Browning settled the question differently. He appreciates the spirit of his times, but in his nature imagination and reason are blended after so unusual a fashion that his best efforts to teach must appear in the form of verse. He gives us his reasons for his choice: —

> Why take the artistic way to prove so much?
> Because it is the glory and good of Art,
> That Art remains the one way possible
> Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine, at least.

By noticing the leading characteristics of the last fifty years — moral earnestness, and its greatest desire, — to be taught, — we have seen what kind of a man a leader in our time must presumably be; namely, a teacher of morals. When then we admit that Browning is one of the great men of the century, we already know enough of his character to understand a discussion of his art, for we expect him to be a moralist.

Many persons have thought the modern atmosphere too scientific, too work-a-day for poetry to thrive. Many have held poetry a toy, to be cast away when life begins to look as stern as it does to us. A few have not accepted these opinions, and in spite of the mechanical and thoughtful generation upon which they fell, have cultivated the Muses with success. There have been in our time two answers to the question which shall be the poet's attitude towards his generation.

Each one of our poets has settled the question of his relations to the world in his own way. One waives aside the earnest pleading of the age, and denies that there is any valuable new discovery about life awaiting it. Those that answer in this way, regard the Time as out of joint, and maintain the best thing to be done is to resuscitate the art of some happier age and make ourselves as comfortable as possible. I am still marking divisions roughly when I place Keats and the Swinburne-Rossetti school in this class. The second answer is given by such men as Shelley, Wordsworth, and Browning. These poets believe that the nineteenth century stands upon a vantage ground, that its aspirations are upward, and while the future of their vision may seem, as it does to Mr. Arnold, "Powerless to be born," they nevertheless believe it will come and meanwhile do what they can to speed its advent. They recognise the confusion that exists in the minds of many, but believe it to be the ferment of a new life. The quality of the age is good, and its instincts, if obeyed, will lead it to heights of knowledge and art never before attained. The second group of poets, therefore, say that the poetry of the nineteenth century should be the herald of these truths that are dimly seen in the distance, and have determined for themselves the poetic mould in which their thought shall be cast.

The general readers of poetry have got into an expectant mood, and think that the art they enjoy should show a new development to correspond to the new knowledge and new experiences the world has gained, — that new wine should have new bottles. But when Browning constructs something to meet this need, the public at first laughs at his oddness, as though a new thing were not to be different from an old after all. It might ask at least his reasons for making such a structure.

Before we examine the make-up of his verse, however, and try to explain the form in which it is cast, there is

a word that ought to be defined. The word "classic" has almost magical powers, but its meaning is little understood. Let us recall the theory of art which the ancient Greeks held. It was considered the function of art to discover in nature the eternal, and to give it form, that this universal residuum might be apprehended through the senses, while the accidental was left to perish. The ideal human form is a type of eternal beauty; sculpture should represent it detached from all circumstances. We wonder at the multitude of statues of Greek divinities that exhibit no trace of emotion on their faces, but in every muscle repose and the majesty of calm. To the Greek, however, art would have been pandering to a morbid taste, if it gave other expression to the body. A furrow on the brow, a strained muscle, quite as much as clothing, were accidents which disturbed the beauty of the simple form.

Poetry obeys the same law, and must give voice to truth, omitting as far as possible all that relates merely to the time, all peculiarities, and the "personal equation," as we call that touch which tells us more about the author and his age than about man and all ages. The great love that Antigone felt for her brother is confronted by Kreon's decree that no one shall bury the body of her brother on pain of death. It is a law of human nature that such love as hers would despise death. In that one fact lies wrapped up the whole play. Each actor is true to his nature, and the result is tragic, — it *must* be so. The poet takes the fact and lets it act itself out in his verse, as terribly true and necessary as gravity. His only care is not to hide the operation of the principle by details that are merely accidental and do not grow out of his first fact, — Antigone's love set against Kreon's law. A perfect play according to a Greek standard is as naked as a perfect statue. A poet is classic, then, when he does not obtrude himself, but merely transcribes into poetic form the universal truth he has discovered. A poet is not classic, when he overlays

the truth he would reveal by comments of his own; when, in fact, he asks you to look at a truth through his eyes, and does not present it and then leave you to get acquainted as you can.

When a perfect human form is at last set free from the marble, when some deep truth of human nature reveals itself in action in a drama, is this the end of art, — that a masterpiece exists? From the contemplation of beautiful objects we ascend to the contemplation of absolute beauty; from each work of art the observer should learn something about the truth and beauty that are in God, — at least so Plato taught. Moreover, Aristotle tells us that tragedy purifies by exciting in our breast pity and fear; and perhaps this saying was in Emerson's mind when he wrote, "only that is poetry which cleanses and mans me."

But art to-day does not often enough penetrate to the soul by either of these methods; does not cleanse it by pity and fear, or light it by giving it an impulse along the road to absolute beauty and truth in God. We, on the contrary, are satisfied with a sensuous enjoyment of the object before us. The effect is superficial. The poet to-day who will not stoop to gratify a low appreciation of art, by producing what has only a surface beauty, but who will adhere to the classic idea of art and try to unfold truth, has a labour which the Greek poets did not have. If the final object of poetry is the cleansing and lifting of the soul, the poet must eke out the spiritual inertia of his audience, and attach to his revelation of beauty an index finger pointing up to absolute beauty. The way in which a modern artist fixes upon his work a tag that shall explain it, is illustrated in Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.' Four stanzas of the ode simply reproduce the beauty of the exquisite shape, and it has rarely happened that one art has been so happily transcribed into the symbols of another. Finally, as though he heard the age saying, "yes, very beautiful, but what of it?" he writes a

fifth stanza, attaches a card to the urn, which tells us the universal truth contained in the beautiful object before us.

> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," — that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The artist to-day in one work must both do something and explain what he has done, if he wishes to do more than please the eye or ear, or tickle the fancy for a moment. How this second or explanatory function is to be added to the first or the universal one is the problem of art among ourselves; if the answers shown us look strange, it is what we may expect, and what painting the lily has always been. Such is the composite art in which Browning's genius has expressed itself.

I think we now see that a modern poet who represents the thought of his age cannot be classic in the Greek sense, but that he must be ornate, overlaying the truth he would reveal with a multitude of analogies and suggestive comments. It must also be said that life to-day presents greater complexity to the observer than it did in the days of Homer. The general characteristic, profusion of ornament, all nineteenth century poetry must have in some measure. The poetry of any given man falls into the lyric, the dramatic, or the epic mould according to his nature. The fact that Horace wrote lyrics and Milton epics does not denote an intellectual choice merely. To express themselves best they had to choose these forms; given their natures their form of verse followed.

> It is the glory and good of Art
> That Art remains the one way possible
> Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.

When we look at the outside of Browning's poetry, let us remember the fact we have observed, and not say that the odd appearance it presents is a whim with no necessary

relation to the poet, or that he might have made it essentially different. It is because the average reader has been frightened at first sight and knows only a portion of the surface of Browning's poetry, that the poet's name has come to be a sort of catch-word for what is foggy. That people have been repelled by the rough outside of his verse may be but another case of that which is illustrated by the cathedral window, — from without dark and blotchy, from within radiant and beautiful. Master the poet's thought, then criticise his form, not *vice versa*. Study a poet's nature and his time, then ask if his art is a natural conclusion from these premises. If he is true to his nature and his age, he will write poetry that is true; if he and his age are great, his verse will be proportionally broader and profounder. We cannot demand more of a poet than that he be the truest poet of his generation — its voice. Homer was only this; Dante was no more. If from some position aloof from all time you look down upon the great poets and say one is greater than another, you are only passing judgment upon the world at the time in which they lived; they were its image, its microcosm, — that is all.

Browning is a theologian with a genius for poetry. By theologian I mean a man who asks of everything in life, "What is your effect upon that eternal thing, the human soul?" and assigns values altogether from the human soul as a centre. Dante, rather than Jonathan Edwards, is a typical theologian as I use the word. The most inquiring minds the world has produced have recognised in the universe three distinct phases of life, — the spiritual, the human, the material, manifested in God, man, and nature. Man receives influences from a spiritual source that he cannot see, and from a material source that he can see, while he himself combines spirit and matter. All along men have tried to simplify the relations of man to what is outside himself, by ignoring one of the three factors.

Some have declared that God might be cancelled from the problem, and have then dealt with man and nature. Others engross man and nature under one law. In some way or other, the philosophic mind has, like the shrewd Horatius, reduced his three antagonists to one, then quickly despatched them, and proclaimed his victory an explanation of the relations of life. Browning, however, has not tampered with the problem, but has honestly tried to answer the question as it was given him; this is my reason for calling him a theologian.

His theology accepts human nature, and does not say that any power possessed by man should be crushed out of him. The monk subduing the flesh by the scourge is a picture hateful to it. This theology tells the soul to embrace all beauty and use the universe because it is now living in eternity. But the soul is not nourished by beauty alone: it is enlarged by knowledge; it is strengthened by accepting hard tasks; it is purified by self-sacrifice, which is the essence of love, and so grows towards God. The judgment day, that mediæval bugbear, is not a crisis at the end of life here; a man is judged in every act as the soul grows strong or weak by its choices; the judgment is a process, not a special scene after death. Life moves on ceaselessly, death is no barrier. Such are some marks of Browning's theology.

Milton discusses seventeenth century theology and problems of government in epic poems. Browning treats nineteenth century theology in monologue, a form which he has unearthed from the Middle Ages and developed into something with as distinct advantages as the lyric, drama, or epic. Although Browning has written many excellent dramas, in which he has been truer to classic definitions than most English poets, yet this species of composition is not congenial to his genius, just as it is not congenial to the spirit of the times. As has been seen, the poet to-day must give a running commentary on the truth his verse

embodies; he must expose it to many cross-lights to bring out all its beauties before untrained eyes; he must interpret his fact by a multitude of analogies, that it may be readily received by minds not so severely trained as the Greek, who could see the curve in the apparently straight lines of the Parthenon. In modern or ancient drama, since the main interest is in the action, any kind of comment obscures the movement of the plot. We frequently find this fault in Shakespeare; a profusion of imagery hinders the progress of events. Therefore the drama is not the best medium for the thought of a modern poet, and the fact that Milton's epics are so little read may sufficiently condemn the epic mould for the purposes of to-day.

The form Browning chose we have called the monologue. Hamlet's soliloquy, if put out by itself as a complete poem, and if there were no play of 'Hamlet,' would be an example of this form. It must be very inartistic, one thinks, to make a poem consist of nothing but a soliloquy, yet there are analogies in received forms. The sonnet is practically a soliloquy of fourteen lines, subject to definite rules. No one in particular is addressed in a sonnet, not even the Muse. The poet is talking to himself. The lyrical and personal qualities of the sonnet without the rigid rules is the spirit of monologue. There is a form of sonnet made up of dialogue. One person speaks in the odd lines; a second answers in the even lines. Action, therefore, can go on in a sonnet, and not merely be described. In a ballad, action is still more possible, as we see in 'Chevy-Chase' or 'The Ancient Mariner.' Action and description find a natural vehicle in lyric poetry, a kind of verse suited for subjective impressions rather than objective reproduction. Browning has tried to find a form of lyric poetry in which action and description would exist most happily side by side. As an artist Browning's work has been to discover and develop the possibilities in monologue. When we put aside his

dramas and examine his poetry from the standpoint of the monologue, we see in all that he has done a unity. In 'Paracelsus' and 'Sordello' he was experimenting with his materials; in 'The Ring and the Book' he mastered them. A student of Browning can best comprehend his art through these three poems.

Perhaps, in the true spirit of Browning, I attach too much importance to my figure of the Taj, with its two gateways. Still I think we had better keep it in mind as we study the poet's masterpiece, where Pompilia rests, and the two earlier poems, in workmanship tentative and introductory. Yet after I ask you to accept my image I must risk marring it. It must be acknowledged that 'Paracelsus' is not Browning's first poem, nor is it to the eye a monologue. However, no harm is done to our first gateway; at most it is only given a double arch.

'Pauline,' the first weak child of our poet's muse, was exposed upon the barren hillside of public neglect. It was rescued and deposited in the British Museum. An accident compelled its author late in life to acknowledge it. 'Paracelsus,' which takes up pretty much the same subject, is counted as his first work by the poet, and is accepted as such by the public. Secondly, although to the eye a page of 'Paracelsus' looks like a dialogue, it is not. There are a number of speakers — Festus, Aprile, Michal — but they do not help the action. They merely give Paracelsus an occasional breathing space, or jog his memory when his mind wanders. Therefore, when we start upon a study of Browning's art in monologue with 'Paracelsus,' we are really doing what he would ask us to do. Still, a few points in the style of both poems are more easily studied in the earlier one where a less finished art fails to hide the machinery.

'Pauline,' a fragment of a confession, is a monologue in blank verse of about a thousand lines. The speaker is at the point of death, though presumably young, and talks

to Pauline, the woman he loves. He reviews his life, and discusses the points in its development and the causes of his mistakes. He has been pulled in two different directions.

> I would have one joy,
> But one in life, so it were wholly mine,
> One rapture all my soul could fill.

On the other hand wisdom attracts him.

> This restlessness of passion meets in me
> A craving after knowledge . . .
> The sleepless harpy with just budding wings.

His position is a variation of the choice of Hercules, Venus contending with Minerva for the possession of a soul. He vacillates, and in his weakness secures the help of neither goddess. As we see him lying there talking to Pauline, we imagine that Fannie Brawne has come to that lonely room in Rome where Keats lies in his fatal sickness, and that at last she listens weeping, perhaps, as the poet goes over his whole life, pours out his soul to her for the last time.

Indeed, the influence of Keats is very perceptible in 'Pauline;' yet there is also an intellectual element, a disposition to weigh the value of things, wholly alien to Keats. The thoughtful vein in the poem reminds us of Shelley; and 'Alastor,' both in form and spirit, may easily have been the poetic father of Browning's first poem. Browning admired Shelley most of modern poets, and the following lines in the poem we are examining no doubt refer to him: —

> And my choice fell
> Not so much on a system as a man —
> On one, whom praise of mine shall not offend,
> Who was as calm as beauty, being such
> Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline.

Although life has perplexed Pauline's lover, and he has not known which to choose, beauty or knowledge,

now at last by the light of love he will see things more clearly, —

> For I . . .
> Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits
> . . . . . .
> As I again go o'er the tracts of thought.
> . . . . . .
> And beauteous shapes will come for me to seize,
> And unknown secrets will be trusted me
> Which were denied the waverer.

In 'Pauline,' Browning shows that as an artist, he is not as yet self-centred; there are too many marks of Keats and Shelley. Nevertheless, he is struggling towards a natural expression. He did not reach his poetic majority until 'Paracelsus.' He neglects to fix the scene of the confession, which shows how early he despised what did not, to his mind, help the reader's study of a soul. Such vagueness we should expect in Shelley. On the other hand, the opening lines of the poem are quite in the style of Keats, —

> Pauline, mine own, bend o'er me — thy soft breast
> Shall pant to mine — bend o'er me — thy sweet eyes,
> And loosened hair, etc.

But the glow of sensuousness in the beginning of the poem soon pales away into cold, intellectual talk about beauty and knowledge.

Browning perceived his tendency toward coldness and monotony, and tried to lighten the burden of his readers by introducing two episodes, — one a description of Andromeda and the Dragon; the other a picture of an ideal abode for lovers that reminds us of Claude Melnotte's home on Lake Como. To help the verse bear off with greater trippingness a subject that inclined to meditative slowness, frequent epigrams are used. There are more lines in 'Pauline' that look as if framed to be quoted than in all the rest of Browning's poetry. Most of these ornaments are short, a line or two. I will venture to quote one

rather longer than the rest. Autumn stands before us as she might look in a painting by Rossetti.

> Autumn has come like spring returned to us,
> Won from her girlishness; like one returned
> A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
> The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
> Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers yet
> With the old smile, but yet so changed and still!

In the later works there is almost an entire absence of passages that lend themselves readily to quotation. A good thought or a happy analogy is left to take care of itself, and is not helped, by roundness of period or grammatical construction, to stand out brighter than its fellows. The choicest passages in a poem may begin and end anywhere in a line, and fall in any person, number, or tense. Instead of being easily detached, they are embedded well-nigh inextricably in the whole. Turn with me to the second arch of our first gateway.

'Paracelsus' consists of some four thousand lines of blank verse, broken by a number of songs. In form a dialogue between Paracelsus, Festus, Aprile, and Michal, it is really a monologue. Says the author: —

> "It is an attempt, probably more novel than happy, to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomena of the mind or the passions by the operation of persons and events; and that, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined, to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout, if not altogether excluded: and this for a reason. I have endeavoured to write a poem, not a drama."

The poem opens in the year 1512 A. D. Onward from that date the friends meet four or five times before the

close of the half century, and on these occasions Paracelsus gives a narrative of what has befallen him, which, with occasional interruptions from the others, constitutes the scenes.

Paracelsus would grasp all knowledge and glorify God by shining upon men like a star of wisdom. Every pleasure, every reward of praise or love, he pushed aside; his goal alone can attract him. He despises the praise of men, and shows them he can do without it; they in turn hate him. He laughs at their enmity, and they denounce him. But they were right and he was wrong. It was because he was out of sympathy with them that he thought them such contemptible creatures. When they would not listen to his cold, loveless visions, he stoops to conquer, and exchanges the power of superior knowledge for the power of trickery. He attempts to hold them by using like a magician their passions and superstitions; but his wiles are seen through, and he is thrust out by the populace as a charlatan.

First, Paracelsus learned that knowledge must go hand in hand with love. Secondly, that a soul must be true to its own highest light, and never stoop to use a mean instrument, whether it gains its ambition or not. Aprile, a poet, represents the voice of love which throughout life called constantly to Paracelsus, but to which he was deaf. Festus stands for faith in Paracelsus; but Paracelsus lost faith in himself. At last, however, he sees what a mistake his plan of life had been, and with his last breath whispers, —

> Festus, let my hand —
> This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!
> Aprile! hand in hand with you, Aprile!
> *Festus.* And this was Paracelsus.

The author did right to define a work as a poem that on the outside looked like a drama. 'Paracelsus' cannot be acted because it has no action. Its force, therefore, is

best felt in a reading; but it is hard reading. No one knows whether the experience of Paracelsus represents aright the soul's growth until he has passed through similar experiences. To one who has passed through like crises, the poem is a twice-told tale; he knows the story and its lesson. To one who has not lived such a life, the crises are either barely intelligible, — that is, as necessary steps in a soul's development, — or in comparison with action, they are but slightly interesting. The wisdom of the whole could be contained in half a dozen sonnets, and in that form would stand a much better chance than at present of becoming widely known. Throughout a poem as long as all of the Ovid we used to read for college, it is a labour to keep in mind the intermediate steps of progress from knowing to loving, — a capital sonnet-subject, by the way.

There is no personal attraction about any of the characters. Aprile comes in with a catching verse, but he is too much of an abstraction to interest us. The fact that there is too little that is tangible in the poem points, I think, to the root difficulty in that species of verse which describes the soul without much reference to the body. It is not purely objective nor subjective. Held up to nature it is monstrous egotism. And suppose Browning were wrong about Paracelsus, or better, suppose a soul does not develop in the way his hero does; in that case we are left with nothing, — neither the living, acting person of drama, whose character good or bad we unravel from his deeds, nor do we have the subjective experience of Browning himself when on some occasion he has received a powerful emotion.

Towards the end of the poem a need of cumulative effect is felt; but there is no action to be got out of such shades as Paracelsus and Festus. The poet therefore allows Paracelsus, when somewhat delirious, to describe the vigorous scenes his uncontrolled brain is fashioning.

The result is striking, but weak and out of harmony with the rest.

Besides its too great length and its shadowy characters, little more than personifications, there is another fault, the same we saw in 'Pauline,' — lack of warmth and movement. A few sweet songs break the monotony of this long poem, and had Browning done nothing else they would give him a place in English anthologies. We are apt to think of Browning's verse as rough and ragged, though, perhaps, like the weapon of Zeus it may be powerful. Yet where can we find more melody than in the following lines, which breathe the same spirit as the wonderful lyrics of the Elizabethan age, —

> Thus the Mayne glideth
> Where my love abideth.
> Sleep 's no softer : it proceeds
> On through lawns, on through meads,
> On and on, whate'er befall,
> Meandering and musical.

We feel the pause in the third line, as if the stream ran back for a moment upon itself in an eddy, or as if the dabbling willow branches made it hard pushing for an instant. Then on it hastens, more swiftly after its stay, till its force is spent where the meadows lie spread out, and the channel winds in great curves. Although a matter-of-fact person might declare that when a brook begins to meander it ceases to be musical, any poet would envy the music of the lines. While Browning has cultivated the music of verse less perhaps than most great poets, he has nevertheless the deepest love for the art of Orpheus. His treatment of music in 'Abt Vogler' and 'A Toccata of Galuppi,' must convince one that he had an ear and soul appealed to by melodious sounds, —

> I would upply all chasms with music, breathing
> Mysterious notions of the soul, no way
> To be defined save in strange melodies.

I would like to transcribe all the lyrics in 'Paracelsus,' which sound like birds' songs in a thick wood, especially the most beautiful and longest one, beginning, 'Over the sea our galley went,' which is in Browning's best mature style. But I will content myself with a shorter selection, one that displays the poet's varied information framed in quaint beauty.

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down sea side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

The second gateway in our approach to Browning's masterpiece is 'Sordello,' an historical poem of about six thousand lines, in five measure iambic metre with couplet rhymes. In a thirteenth century troubadour, Browning has found a type of the artist who, with great natural gifts and the wish to put knowledge as well as emotion into his work, is confused by the events of life, and dies without accomplishing anything. The early sensuousness of his verse turns into seriousness, and his audience deserts him. He is not self-centred enough to work out his own nature in spite of circumstances; he is controlled from without. The Guelf and Ghibelline wars are transforming the beautiful Italian cities into shambles. Sordello feels deep sympathy with the people, and is stimulated to act, but loses his own identity by exchanging the deeds

of verse for those of arms. His power consequently is dissipated, and his slight accomplishment is, practically, failure. Although incapable of action, he can make a right choice. When he discovers that he is the son of Salinguerra, the most famous Ghibelline soldier, he will not accept the imperial badge, which to him meant (wrongly, I think) desertion of the people, but tramples it under foot, and in the act dies. This unfortunate poet is certainly cousin-german to Pauline's lover.

As a narrative of events the poem is upon a first reading unintelligible. Indeed, a friendly hand writes, "it is one of the most incomprehensible in all literature." A minute knowledge of a most difficult piece of history — the Italian cities in the later Middle Ages — is presumed. Yet did a reader possess this knowledge, he would be perplexed by the way in which fictitious characters are mixed up with historical ones, and he would share the misery of an unlearned reader in being utterly unable to keep the thread of the story clearly before his mind. The narrative goes backward and forward until a web is woven, from which the reader cannot extricate himself without help.

When Browning set about 'Sordello,' he had learned that monologue — the recitation of an event by the actor — was tiresome. Even given the specious appearance of dialogue, as in 'Paracelsus,' the effect was the same. He changed the mould somewhat in 'Sordello,' which is a monologue delivered in the third person. The qualities of the verse were the same, and the ideas to be brought out were the same as in Browning's previous work. "The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires, and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul." The only new factors in this poem are mechanical ones.

I called attention to a method by which Browning gave the closing scene in 'Paracelsus' a good deal of life. The device was to have Paracelsus describe a dream. A

description of an event by a third person has advantages; it can tell us about people who do not act, yet put action into the recital. If, on the contrary, inactive people were allowed to work out their own lives as in a drama, or were set about describing their lives which, when performance is concerned, have been typical failures, no action could be expected. If anybody else had written 'Sordello' I should call it a narrative poem. Since in Browning's hands we recognize the poem to be a new study along the line of monologue, I would rather think of it as a monologue in the third person.

The quality that Browning wished to give the verse he succeeded in giving it. Though the historical tangle makes 'Sordello' hard reading, yet the poem has brilliancy and in parts action, though the onward movement is obscure. Indeed, it is very much like the man in pantomime, who makes all the gestures necessary for a vigorous progress, but does not gain ground, only beckons at the distance.

The means by which he rescued his story from being wearisome, however, is not the most important discovery that Browning shows us in 'Sordello,' for he uses monologue in the third person very rarely afterward. The great discovery the poet made, which must have rejoiced him as Cortez rejoiced

> when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien,

was Italy, which he beheld from the Alpine heights of his former verse. Browning's theological mind expressed in monologue had a tendency to syllogistic nakedness. His lofty thought was as cold as it is said the spaces are between the stars. In Italy he found not only a gorgeous background for his ideas, but men and women of rich natures to put upon his stage. I cannot conceive what

he would have become as a literary workman, had he not made the discovery to which I call attention. More metaphysical and more learned than any poet of the century, many dangers lay in his way. A keener observer, but with less fancy than Shelley, his philosophy must have found another means of expression from that his predecessor's bewildering Muse displayed. Without a disposition to repose in simple nature like Wordsworth, Browning could not have followed along the path of the 'Excursion.' It may be unprofitable to discuss such hypothetical questions, but as far as we can see, it was Italy that saved Robert Browning the poet. Otherwise his learning and his complex knowledge of the soul must have produced the most pedantic and mystic verse imaginable. Such a catastrophe, however, we have been spared, and in view of what the discovery of Italy was to Browning and to English poetry, one is tempted to see a poetic justice in the fact that in Italy Browning's wife is buried.

When once his Muse had found that sunny land, she rarely left it. The scenes of his greatest works are laid there, — his masterpiece, 'The Ring and the Book,' 'Luria,' 'Pippa Passes,' his finest idyl or mask (to give it a name), besides a host of lyrics and other pieces. Italy is the studio of Browning's art.

We have seen how Browning took up monologue, as Hamlet takes a bunch of rapiers, tests one or two forms, sees imperfections in them, and rejects them. At last we saw him grasp the particular form that was best suited to his genius. In 'The Ring and the Book' he found the broadest scope for his thought, and a form adapted to his nature. Let us close our study of the development of his art with a brief examination of his masterpiece.

'The Ring and the Book' is a poem in blank verse of a little over twenty thousand lines, and consists of twelve parts. In the first part the plot is told by the poet, and the incident that brought the story to his knowledge A

manuscript volume of law briefs, and letters picked up at a book-stall in Florence, is the "book" of the title. The "ring" is a fancy of the poet's. When an Etruscan jeweller wished to make a ring of the purest possible gold, he mixed the precious metal with an alloy. The substance is then "a manageable mass." After he has formed and cut the ring to his wish, he removes with an acid the alloy, —

> self-sufficient now, the shape remains,
> The rondure brave, the lilied loveliness,
> Gold as it was, is, shall be ever more;
> Prime nature with an added artistry —
> No carat lost, and you have gained a ring.

The poet compares himself to the goldsmith; all the fancy and "artistry" of the verse to the serviceable alloy which will evaporate when once the story, pure gold, is fixed in the reader's mind. Each of the eleven remaining books, except the last, is given up to an actor in the events narrated, who rehearses the whole story from the side of his personal experience.

At Rome, on Christmas night, in 1697, a horrible murder was committed. 'The Ring and the Book' is a history of the trial.

An old couple of some property, but of no social importance, give their daughter, Pompilia, a girl of thirteen, to Count Guido Franceschini. The Count, for his part, supplied an ancient name and a ruined fortune. He had spent his life in the household of a cardinal, and at fifty discovers that he is still on the bottom round of the ladder to success. The parents of Pompilia, Pietro and Violante, go with their daughter to the estate of Guido in Arezzo, for he is now master of their property. Life there is soon made intolerable for the old people, and they return to Rome. Once home they spread the report that Pompilia is not their daughter, but a child from the dregs of the city. The story is terrible but true. Violante, to please

her husband, and to secure the descent of some property, had pretended to give birth to a child that in fact she had received from a brother. Pietro had been as much deceived as his neighbors. A lawsuit followed the disclosure, in which the old people try to recover Pompilia's dowry. The poor child, left to the mercy of the Count, has a miserable existence. When Guido sees the aversion which Pompilia has for him, he hates her, and would willingly get rid of her, if he could do it without losing the dowry. After four years of torture, she can endure her position no longer, and to save her own soul as well as the life of a child soon to be born, she flies to Rome with a young Canon, Giuseppe Caponsacchi. They are overtaken on the way by Guido, and are placed in custody. A trial of the case relegated the priest to an out-of-the-way village, sent Pompilia into the Convent for Penitents, and allowed the Count to return to Arezzo. After a time Pompilia is permitted to dwell in the house of Pietro and Violante, who still love her, and there her son is born. On getting news of this, Guido takes four country lads, and plunges on to Rome, breaks in upon the family of his father-in-law and murders Pietro, Violante, and Pompilia. The murderers flee blindly from the city, but are found in their bloody clothes asleep in a barn, where they had flung themselves, overcome with fatigue. In spite of a multitude of wounds, Pompilia lives a few days, and tells the story of her life to a monk. The murderers are brought to trial, and from the court the case is sent up to the Pope, for it was supposed that inasmuch as the Count belonged to one of the lower orders of priesthood, and came from a distinguished family, the papal decision would release the prisoners. This hope, however, was disappointed: the five murderers were put to death.

"A disgusting story from beginning to end," you will say. And truly the facts of the case have a disreputable look. "There is foul sin enough in the atmosphere of

Pompilia's birthplace. There is added the trick of Violante by which she deceives her husband. Next you heap up a mercenary marriage, — an innocent child of thirteen is forced to marry a brute of fifty; the flight of a wife in company with a priest; then the murder of three people, and the execution of five men. One would rather pass, holding his breath, such a festering heap; but you ask me to take it into my system under the name of poetry." A reader inclined to argue in such a fashion could make out a strong case against Browning. But when you look at the facts, you will see that within their limits can be naturally discussed most of the questions that interest modern society. In that possibility lay the value of the subject to Browning.

'The Ring and the Book' is a work of art of beautiful design which holds not only wise thoughts about life, and a great play of fancy, but a new creation to take place among the immortals, — Desdemona, Ophelia, and their sisters. We can imagine Browning's great poem has this inscription — To Pompilia.

Although Browning has let so many men and women speak in his verse, we feel acquainted with few of them. We smile, perhaps, as we think of Bishop Blougram with his cut and dried views of his office and his stout argumentative armour; he is, indeed, real to us. Fra Lippo Lippi is pretty distinct, with the watchmen "fiddling" at his throat, and Pippa, too, with her song influencing so many lives as she passes along. Lucullus would approve the few and select guests at a symposium of Browning's creations. Perhaps the list could be enlarged. Even a dinner-party after Byron's taste might be arranged "in number equal to the Muses;" but no immortal like Hamlet or Lear among the number, unless we ask Pompilia. Many of Browning's men and women are abstractions, their names stand merely for ideas; but Pompilia is real. As Guido's hooked dagger proved, she is flesh and blood.

Springing up out of the mud, and resting upon dark waters, she is indeed "lilied loveliness." She grew up more a flower than a human being. No one taught her anything. When her husband in his villainy showed the court letters full of warm love which he said she had written to Caponsacchi, she could simply say that she knew neither how to read nor how to write. She is not like the girls Roman art students paint, — blank-looking peasants with no soul in their faces. Pompilia is a "woman-child," who on her death-bed could give right answers to most of the questions that make life perplexing.

> Marriage-making for the earth,
> With gold so much, — birth, power, repute so much,
> Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
> Be as the angels rather, who, apart
> Know themselves into one, are found at length
> Married, but marry never, no, nor give
> In marriage; they are man and wife at once
> When the true time is: here we have to wait.

Hear her talking to Caponsacchi, the young Canon, as they are whirled along in a carriage towards Rome.

> Tell me, are men unhappy, in some kind
> Of mere unhappiness at being men,
> As women suffer, being womanish?
> . . . . .
> It hurts us if a baby hides its face
> Or child strikes at us punily, —
> . . . . .
> And strength may have its drawback, weakness 'scapes.

If a soul meets nobly the experiences of life, it will develop into loveliness without the aid of knowledge or "the humanities;" at least such is the poet's thought as represented in Pompilia.

> It was not given Pompilia to know much,
> Speak much, to write a book, to move mankind,
> Be memorised by who records my time.
> Yet if in purity and patience, if
> In faith held fast despite the plucking fiend

> . . . . If in right returned
> For wrong, most pardon for worst injury,
> If there be any virtue, any praise, —
> Then will this woman-child have proved — who knows ? —
> Just the one prize vouchsafed unworthy me,
> Seven years a gardener of the untoward ground
> I till.

So speaks the Pope.

Caponsacchi, Pompilia's deliverer, stands before us like another Theseus. We admire him, and see the progress he made in understanding life through the strange, sad part he played. Yet in a way he is a special study of a young Italian priest of the seventeenth century. He appreciates Pompilia; that is his greatest recommendation. His feeling for her is reverence like that he has for the Holy Virgin in the chancel of his cathedral.

> You know this is not love, Sirs, — it is faith,
> The feeling that there 's God, he reigns and rules
> Out of this low world; that is all; no harm!

He is brave, he is pure; but as a poetic creature he lacks the charm that Pompilia has for us. He learned that God is served not alone by administering the offices of the church, by writing verses for a pagan bishop, or by keeping his services to his fellows within conventional limits. He discovered he served God more truly when he had the courage to see that Pompilia needed his aid, and when he did not withhold his hand.

As for Count Guido, he is a thorough villain, yet with so good an excuse for himself that when he described to the court his views of life, some of the judges must have shifted uneasily in their chairs at seeing how like were their own ideas to those of a murderer. For the rub was that Guido defended himself by syllogisms, the premises of which were every-day maxims in society. There was no doubt about the soundness of the premises, but the conclusions drawn from them were altogether untrustworthy.

"Honor is a thing of value, for if I have it any one connected with me is benefited." "Certainly," replied the world, "all hereditary nobility, all patrician power is founded upon that fact." "Then if I share this valuable possession with somebody, and for value received he gives into my hands money, is there anything wrong in the transaction?" The judges find difficulty in answering, for when Guido married Pompilia he has done that very thing. Roman law, it appears, would have justified Guido in killing Pompilia, had he done the deed when, after warm pursuit, he overtook and confronted the runaways. Guido laughs at such discrimination, and in a step or two leads his judges to a point where logically they must admit his right to kill his wife when he did. Admit that the end justifies the means, then listen to Guido.

> I don't hear much of harm that Malchus did
> After the incident of the ear, my lords!
> Saint Peter took the efficacious way;
> Malchus was sore but silenced for his life:
> He did not hang himself i' the Potter's Field
> Like Judas, who was trusted with the bag
> And treated to sops after he proved a thief.

"I may punish a disobedient servant, you say; when does the instrument of punishment cease to be allowable, — a switch, a stick, a pitch-fork, a dagger, where should I have stopped?" Upon the pages of the poem Guido seems too much given to self-analysis for a villain in real life; but when we have closed the book, we find him shaping himself very distinctly in our minds, and living by his own natural rights as a rascal, like Iago.

Although the plot of 'The Ring and the Book' is a curious one, I think we can see the reason Browning approved of it. From some central position he wished to look upon life and tell the world what he saw, and for this purpose he took a seat at a trial such as we have described, held in Rome. A trial in any court brings all

sorts of odd intelligence to light. It ransacks family history for generations back; it does not tolerate privacy. In court the philosopher can study phases of character and strange sides of life to his heart's content. From a seat by his friend the judge he can look down upon all conditions of life, all social questions, and peer into the dark nooks and corners of the world.

Such are some of the advantages Browning secured by weaving his poem about a great trial. The bare facts of the case would retain their ugly look in a novel or in a play: prose would not exalt them sufficiently; the swift action of drama would not afford them enough covering. Yet a plot like this, that ranges from a harlot to a Pope, is a necessity, if Browning is to have full scope for his powers. The four rustics who had a hand in the murder offer a study in primitive human nature. They were not vicious; they were merely ruddy, human animals. "A goat to kill or a man, what is the difference?" they might ask. We hear Browning say, "Such were the much vaunted denizens of the Golden Age." From innocent brutishness to the spirituality of Pompilia is a range that embraces all human existence. Hence the choice of the plot. A bundle of cases in ethics and theology is taken to what might be called the Supreme Court in such matters. The Pope, who is made to figure as the final judge of the questions, is painted in colours that it is a pity more of the successors of St. Peter have not deserved.

The form of the poem is as precise within limits as that of the drama, the epic, or lyric. It is not merely eight or ten different ways of telling the same story. The construction is carefully planned, the mould is unique. A monologue when talked into the air, like the "Mad-House Cells," could be censured on the ground that it was unnatural. It is true that people do mutter, do soliloquise, and doubtless so superior a company as Browning's *dramatis personæ* might offer the same good excuse as the

man in the anecdote. When asked why he soliloquised so much, he replied, "Because I like to converse with a sensible person." Andrea del Sarto is a good subject for monologue, as he talks to Lucrezia; so is Fra Lippo Lippi arguing with the watchmen who have caught him in a frolic. But even a monologue addressed to some one named in the poem becomes unnatural when it takes on the length of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology.' That worthy ecclesiastic, notwithstanding his good table, would hardly get many men to sit through more than one such harangue. In fact, the bishop's table-companion in the present case flees immediately to the uttermost parts of the world. A man either could not talk so uninterruptedly, or he would not be permitted to. In 'The Ring and the Book' many of the features we object to in the earlier monologue have disappeared. Pompilia's confession to the Augustinian is a natural monologue; so is a lawyer's plea, the statement of a witness (if he is bold and fortunate), a story that one has been asked to tell, a letter, and a sermon, — all are natural monologues. These are what the separate parts of the poem contain, except the introduction in part one, and the section called The Pope. Each person tells his story without interruption, — Pompilia to the monk, Guido and Caponsacchi to the judges, the lawyers rehearse their speeches.

There is something else in 'The Ring and the Book' that reminds one of Greek dramas. The two great choruses, Half Rome, The Other Half Rome, although confined to their sections in the first part of the poem, ring out the changes of the popular mind like Strophe and Antistrophe.

Apart from the arrangement of the main lines of the poem there is a studied effect produced by the choice of characters, and the particular parts of the twelve in which they shall appear. The lawyer, Hyacinthus de Archangelis, is the comedian of the piece, and like Shakespeare's fool,

he relieves for a little our oppressed wits, and creates an appetite for serious parts. His brother lawyer we might call the satirist of the poem. Johannes-Baptiste Bottenus is not satirical in his words, nor is Hyacinthus consciously a humourist; but after the reader has been carried away by Pompilia's woes, he is suddenly brought face to face with the selfishness of Johannes and the good-nature of Hyacinthus; the effect is equal to keen satire and broad comedy. These lawyers look at the whole subject, suffering, sin, murder, trial, and all, as something sent in the providence of God to help their fame a little, or to give their children an extra allowance of bread and butter.

We have now come to the end of our rapid study of Browning's use of monologue. If there were time, it would be interesting to examine his art in the details of technique. The bold, vivid portraits he dashes off in a line or two should claim our attention; his frequent use of alliteration and the other amenities of style which he is thought to care little about; the wonderful imagery by which he helps us understand the subtle moods of the souls should be examined. In his early poems similes stood out from the body of the verse, as a button painted by Meissonier would stand out on the blouse of one of Millet's peasants; in the later poems the tone of the whole has been raised to the brilliancy of the early figures. But these minute studies hardly concern us, who have been engaged upon the monologue as a whole.

The art of Browning in monologue was developed, it would seem, as a consequence of moral qualities in himself and his time. He shared the serious questions of his generation, and desired to teach his fellows truths of the spirit. He chose a poetic form, monologue, because that form permitted a combination of action and description, where his personal interpretation of the story might at any time intrude itself. This method led naturally to a cold,

metaphysical, and lifeless treatment of his subjects, which were little more than abstractions, until the discovery of Italy as a rich storehouse of personages and incidents fortunately rescued him, and gave his themes warmth and motion. Browning is never truly a dramatic poet, — one who lets life act itself freely before his readers. He muses upon life in very vigorous speech, to be sure, but still in terms of the intellectual rather than in terms of action. He is analytical, searching the consciousness of his characters for motives, moods, and spiritual processes, and these he expounds with all the virile brilliancy of his strong nature and the egoism of the monologue.

One who does not care to be numbered among the prophets may still believe that Browning will always be considered the master of this species of verse. A prophecy that goes farther than this must take a hint from Delphic oracles, and not be too hard and fast in its phraseology. Certainly the problems of life that Browning discusses come to every thoughtful man; but whether succeeding ages will have the time or the taste to go to such massive poems for the answers, the future alone can tell.

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS.

By CHARLES GORDON AMES.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 25, 1890.]

About the year 1520, Magellan, in that voyage of exploration which first circumnavigated the globe, made a landing on the southernmost part of the new-found continent. A chronicler of the expedition relates that the captain by a stratagem had shackled two gigantic Patagonians.

"When they saw how they were deceived they roared like bulls, and cried upon their great devil, Setebos. They say that when any of them die, there appear ten or twelve devils, leaping and dancing about the bodies of the dead, and seeming to have their own bodies painted with divers colours; and that among them there is one seen bigger than the others who maketh great mirth and rejoicing. The great devil they call Setebos."[1] ('Navigationi e Viaggi,' Venezia, 1554.)

In writing 'The Tempest,' about fifty years after this chronicle was printed, Shakespeare betrays his knowledge of it by putting the phrase, "My dam's god, Setebos," into the mouth of the "monster," half human and half devil, whom Prospero finds on the island and tames into a servant and a drudge, teaching him language, which Caliban enjoys chiefly because it enables him to curse.

On two contrasted characters in 'The Tempest,' Dowden makes this comment: —

"Ariel [is] an unbodied joy, too much a creature of light and air to know human affection or human sorrow; Caliban (the name

[1] It should be borne in mind that Catholic writers apply the term "devil" to all pagan deities.

formed from cannibal) stands at the other extreme, with all the elements in him — appetites, intellect, even imagination — out of which man emerges into civilisation, but with a moral nature that is still gross and malignant."

In Caliban the development of intelligence without conscience produces quick-sighted animal sense and cunning; and being also without reverence or sympathy, his contact with a superior produces cowardice, envy, and hate. But some deep-lying instinct of a more spiritual sort makes all the faculties quiver with superstitious dread, and stirs this bestial brother of us all with a vague sense of mysterious powers at work in all things around him. His awe in Prospero's presence is like the restraint which many animals feel in the presence of man:

> I must obey: his art is of such power,
> It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
> And make a vassal of him.

We have here the germ of Browning's Caliban. Rather let us say that Browning's genius seizes upon this creation of Shakespeare to use it as a lay-figure on which to hang the drapery of a subtle philosophy; or perhaps to inline upon Shakespeare's outline the workings of a rudimentary spiritual intelligence, looking out upon the universe through animal eyes, — eyes wonderfully clear and sharp, as all animal eyes are, for their purpose, but no better than crinkled glass for transmitting the light of the finer realities.

From several allusions in the poem, I suspect Browning had followed up the Patagonian clue somewhat farther than the Magellan chronicle, as a few facts gathered from any encyclopedia may show. For example: (1) The natives are much given to drinking, and make an intoxicating liquor from the wild berries of their woods. (2) Their superstition makes much of the sun and moon, but takes no account of the stars. (3) They explain all natural phe-

nomena as if caused by their own conduct; and when a tempest arises, they are filled with terror, crouch together in their huts, and do not stir till it is over. (4) "The Patagonian never eats or drinks without turning to the sun, and throwing down before him a few scraps of meat or a few drops of water, and uttering an invocation," generally like this: "O Father, great Man, King of the World! give me favour, dear friend, day by day, — good food, good drink, good sleep. I am poor myself. Are you hungry? Here is a poor scrap; eat if you wish."

But researches among the lower tribes of mankind bring out the same thing in substance. They all, like children, interpret the order of the world by their own limitations, and project their own image upon the sky and imagine it to be a likeness of God. To the earliest edition of this poem, Browning prefixed the words which a Hebrew psalmist attributes to Jehovah: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." But the secondary title of the poem gives the key equally well, 'Natural Theology upon the Island.' Caliban's insulation is more than geographical. He is shut off from all instruction except the impact of dumb nature upon his senses; he has no idea of spiritual relationship; no kinship with other intelligences; no capacity or opportunity for vital sympathy; no human schooling for justice, kindness, truth, duty or beauty, any more than the creatures that crawl or fly or swim around him. The low tone of his filial sentiment is hinted by his calling the horrid old Sycorax his "dam" and not his mother. Browning still further emphasises this low-downness by making him speak of himself nearly always in the third person, as children do when they first begin to talk.

The senses report to us external facts or appearances; they do not report meanings. The beginnings of reflection are therefore necessarily crude: the forms of sense-impression still dominating thought, even after instruction or

experience has set up a series of internal movements toward rationality. Hence I have heard a small boy ask, "Can God walk on the plastering like a fly?" When the mother tells the very little girl that God is everywhere, the question comes like a shot, "Is he in the sugar-bowl?" "Yes," whereupon the child claps on the cover and exclaims in innocent glee, "Then I 've got him." This is pure Calibanism *minus* grown-up malignity.

While Prospero and Miranda take their noonday *siesta*, supposing that Caliban drudges at his task, this creature, living coarsely in his senses, sprawls swinishly in a pit of mire, kicks the slush with both feet, chuckles as his skin is tickled by the crawling vermin, and catches and crunches the fruit that drops within reach. Then comes a fine psychological touch. At sight of the sunlight on the water — a picture framed by the mouth of his cave — Caliban becomes aware of a larger world, and drops or rises into free-thinking, after his own fashion. Channing tells us that, in his boyhood, as he walked on the shore of Narragansett Bay, the sight of the grandeur around him made him aware of the powers within him. Let us do Caliban the justice to say that his mind likewise, what there is of it, responds, in its own poor way, to the touch of nature. Light shines into his mind, as into the cave where he lies; and with the same effect, — it sets the shadows dancing. Then his "rank tongue blossoms into speech," and he

> Talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
> Touching that other, whom his dam called God.

Another touch: now, "Talk is safer than in winter-time." God seems absent because Caliban feels comfortable. By and bye, when cold pinches and his bones ache, that will be to him a sign of the Real Presence, and he will cower and hold his tongue.

Now the soliloquy begins:

> Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
> 'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

Why so, more than in the sunshine? The weirdness of moonlight, the chill of the night air and the vagueness of all forms have always been suggestive of mystery; and among some ancient people the worship of the moon preceded the worship of the sun. At the same time, the moon, with its frequent changes, seemed like the capricious friendship of a Deity not understood, half trusted, half distrusted. "So He!"

Next comes in the Patagonian limitation. Setebos made moon and sun, but "the stars came otherwise." His realm includes this portion of space, — air, earth, island and sea, — nothing more. The world of Setebos must not be much larger than Caliban's world. But why did Setebos make anything? Well, he was restless, — wanted occupation and wanted to think of something beside his own discomfort; wanted something to vent his force upon, — his pleasure now, and now his spite, envy, mockery. Could n't make an equal, just as he could n't make himself. But of course he would make something worth his while; something good enough for him to admire and be proud of, and big enough to tease; something strong enough to provoke and resist him; in short, something to *excite* him, just as Caliban excites himself by a pungent tipple that goes to his head.

Then Caliban considers how *he* would feel and act, if he could make a living creature that would be wholly in his power; say a bird; a rather fine bird, that he would be fond and proud of, and could fool with, and treat as he pleased. "So He!"

At this point, Caliban seems to come in sight of moral distinctions; at least Browning does! But these are quickly waved aside, so far as Setebos is concerned.

> 'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
> Nor kind, nor cruel; He is strong and Lord.

Of course! Caliban reasons from the use he makes of power over creatures inferior to himself.

'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
. . . . . .
So He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed.

This is fine satire, a slash at the theological speculations which represent God as arbitrary, yet claim that He is benevolent all the same! Mrs. Stowe once told Starr King that she had been hearing a sermon which painted God as a devil, and added what was far worse, — that this devil loved us!

But then rises a protest. Such a Being, after all, knows this; and it explains His dislike. If the pipe I blow through should boast that it is necessary to me, because it can make the sound I cannot make with my mouth alone, would I not smash it with my foot? "So He!" Setebos, like Caliban, is mindful of His own glory, and punishes His creatures if they take airs in His presence.

But Browning could not accomplish the whole purpose of this poem merely by descending into the low consciousness of this beast-man; he must also let Caliban look through the poet's eyes and deliver judgment upon some of the subtlest speculations of the ages. Why is Setebos "rough, cold and ill at ease?"

Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows, — the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.

Is this a reflection of Jupiter's dethronement of Saturn, or of the expulsion of one religious system by another? But both Hindoo and Persian theologies recognise back of all the active deities — back of creative Brahma and

Ormuzd — an Eternal One as serene and as inert as space itself. There may be "something over Setebos."

> There may be something quiet o'er His head,
> Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
> Since both derive from weakness in some way.
> I joy because the quails come; would not joy
> Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
> This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

Browning goes very far in thus making even Caliban feel blindly after a Power that he can respect.

But if there be a far-away god of the star-region, mightier far than Setebos, let Him stay there: it might be so much the worse if He came this way. Enough for Caliban that he must reckon with this one, who because He cannot "soar to what is quiet and hath happy life," wreaks His power on such a poor world as He can make and manage.

After all, Setebos in his uneasiness is only trying to ape the Greater One, as Caliban recalls how he has tried to ape Prospero by making a book out of leaves, by dressing up in a magic robe made of "the eyed skin of a supple oncelot," and by training

> A four-legged serpent, he makes cower and couch,
> Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
> And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
> 'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
> He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
> Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
> Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
> And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
> In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
> A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
> 'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
> Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.

Caliban's dam had held that the Quiet made all things; and that Setebos only came in to make trouble. This agrees with the Patagonian conception of Setebos as head devil; or rather with the chronicler's version thereof.

But Caliban "holds not so." The defects of things imply either a defective creator or a spiteful motive. "Who made things weak meant weakness He might vex." But there are kind and friendly aspects: how explain? If Setebos has any liking for things, it must be because they profit him, — serve him a turn, somehow. Caliban and his blinded beast love what does them good; Setebos merely sees better, and so can hate or love just as he likes. His love is as heartless as his hate.

And if Setebos is active, it is not because He cares for any of the creatures, but because He wants to while away the time and to work off His surplus energy, just as Caliban himself piles up turf and stones and drives stakes and crowns the whole with a sloth's skull.

> No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
> 'Shall some day knock it down again: so He!

This may seem a light touch; but to my mind its suggestiveness is tremendous. Conceive of this whole universe — earth, solar system, starry heavens and galaxies of suns and worlds — all launched into existence to run like clock-work for no matter what millions or quadrillions of ages, but finally to run down; every sun to spend its heat, every earth to grow dark and cold, every life to go out like an extinct spark, and nowhere any permanent spiritual product from the whole outlay of wisdom and power in creation: what then is the summing up of history but this — that the Creator, like an infinite Setebos or Caliban, "falls to make something," with "no use at all i' the work," and ends all by knocking it down again. Even to our poor reason, what adequate vindication can there be of the Cosmos unless it be indeed what our higher faith makes it, — a nursery, a school, and a temple for immortal children of Light and Love?

But Caliban is not without reasons for thinking of Setebos with dread. Has n't a hurricane destroyed his harvest, just as it was coming to maturity? Has n't a single tidal

wave "licked flat" six weeks' labour done to fence off the invading turtles? Has n't a burning stone been shot down out of the sky at the very spot where a half hour before he had lain down for a nap?

> He hath a spite against me, that I know,
> Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?

These lines recall the story told me by an army chaplain whose regiment had seen service in Louisiana. One day the chaplain heard his coloured servant humming a ditty:

> De big bee set on de fence,
> De little bee make all de honey;
> De black man do all de work,
> De wite man hab all de money.

"Luke," asked the chaplain, "Why do you suppose the Lord gave the white man the best chances?" "Well, massa, I 'se thought a heap o' dat ar; and I 'se made up my mine dat de Lord he done it jes' out o' *meanness*." "Tut, tut, Luke!" said the chaplain, reprovingly; "you would n't talk that way about the good Lord." "Well, massa, I know'd *you 'd* say dat ar; but I 'se made up my mine dat de Lord he 's a wite man hisself; and he seed dat de wite fokses is like hisself and so he done gone and gin 'em de bestest o' everything." "He hath a spite against me; he favours Prosper."

But Caliban next attacks the question how he may get on the right side of Setebos, as Prosper does. No easy matter; for what pleases in one mood may irritate in another. Judging Setebos by himself, he concludes that the god would be just as likely to resent as to approve an act done on purpose to please him; for he would let his creatures know that he would n't be pleased by compulsion of any act of theirs.

Well, then, is there no way out of it? None, unless Setebos should die, or take a notion to make another world, and so forget this; or outgrow his present self and so rise into the Quiet.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this, —
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day, — or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

Yes, there 's another way out. Caliban himself may die; and he is too much of a Sadducee to hold his dam's faith that after death Setebos will plague his enemies and feast his friends. No, the best and worst he can do is to keep us alive and torment us as long as possible.

Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy.

Another keen thrust at a theory of life which Browning delights to impale. In how many passages has he identified life itself with joy, and joy with the Love that sends it! So exclaims Lessing: "What can please the Creator more than a happy creature!" Yet we sometimes hear a sombre intimation that our blessings are taken away lest we enjoy them too much; that our children are removed because parental love needs to be checked. And in 'Maxims and Examples of the Saints' I have read that there is peculiar virtue in eating unpalatable food and in subjecting the body to painful inflictions. Yet thousands of us have smiled at the pious old lady who walked to church along the muddy street instead of taking the clean sidewalk, "because," as she said, "one cannot do too much for the Lord."

So Caliban thinks to keep on the right side of Setebos by feigning misery, and to flatter his superior by showing envy.

Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,

O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "*What I hate be consecrate*
"*To celebrate Thee and Thy state; no mate*
"*For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?*"

This is no extravagance of Browning's. It would be ludicrous if it were not tragically true to the religious history of a large part of mankind, who have thought to avert divine wrath, flatter divine vanity and win divine favour by striking humiliating attitudes and by a thousand forms of sacrifice, self-mutilation and self-torture. "What I [affect to] hate be consecrate." Is it not a curious testimony of language that the Greek verb *anathematise* means both to curse and to devote to the gods?

But now for the *dénoûment*. The last twelve lines contain the whole poem; and for compressed explosive dramatic and psychologic force they are, so far as I know, rarely equalled in the world's literature. Just as Caliban's treasonable soliloquy culminates in the comfortable hope that Setebos may some day "grow decrepit, doze and doze, as good as die," the tropical thunder-storm, with its attendant hurricane and cloud of sand, bursts on him like a day of judgment and a trump of doom.

What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird — or, yes,
There scuds His raven, that hath told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze —
A tree's head snaps — and there, there, there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!

Even were I competent to discuss Browning's *technique*, I should not wish to do so now. I have been more concerned to grasp and follow the sense of this poem than to note its literary construction, its felicity and force of diction, its occasional approach to the grotesque, or even its masterly and marvellously picturesque presentation of an obscure and difficult theme. To dwell chiefly on an author's style, and to study his verbal quality and the joiner work of his sentences, after the way of merely literary criticism, or even to applaud the march and music of his verse, is to put manner before matter, and so to fall into dilettantism. And a passionate, undiscriminating admiration of an author may operate to muzzle a great voice which speaks because it has somewhat to say.

What has Browning to say in this particular utterance? A great deal, I think. Perhaps in justice to him and to our poor relation, Caliban, we should construe this poem as if it were a fragment; that is, we should read it in the light of what the author has said otherwheres. Take this from 'Christmas Eve.'

> Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
> Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
> Of what right is, than arrives at birth
> In the best man's acts that we bow before.

In the same poem he had already said:

> The truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
> Though He is so bright and we so dim,
> We are made in his image to witness him.

This is a favourite conception of the philosophers, — that man is a microcosm — an epitome of the universe; or as Emerson poetically puts it, "God hid the whole world in thy breast." But man the infant, or the savage, the undeveloped man, cannot read what is written in his own nature till light enters; and this kind of light comes not from staring at sun and moon, it is a "light that never

was on sea or land." It comes from the quickening of his own deeper faculties.

Now take this passage from 'Paracelsus': —

> Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all,
> Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
> Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
> This perfect, clear perception — which is truth.
> A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
> Blinds it, and makes all error.

Now we see what ails poor Caliban. He too is God's creature, with a living soul made in the divine image "to witness Him;" and in Caliban, as surely as in an archangel, "there is an inmost centre where truth abides in fulness;" but "wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in," "a baffling and perverting carnal mesh" which "makes all error."

And in his case, the flesh wall is very dense; his soul is buried alive, and slumbers under heavy opaque ancestral coverings.

But let Paracelsus finish his remark, which has been interrupted by Caliban, or by me.

> To Know
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
> The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
> And you trace back the effluence to its spring
> And source within us; where broods radiance vast,
> To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
> Shall favour.

'Paracelsus,' which first appeared in 1835, does not give us the whole of Browning's matured thought. He would not have said in his later years that "chance" is the liberator of the "imprisoned splendour." Rather he would say that the liberation comes from contact with a living

and luminous personality, — the Life that is awake rousing the life that is asleep. This gives us Browning's conception of the Christ — the God-man, whose personality is duplicated in all men and women in whom the same light shines, and shines not for themselves alone.

Caliban's insulation from all the humanising influences of sympathy and instruction operates like imprisonment for life. We might draw from such a monstrosity of arrested development a pathetic and powerful appeal or protest against all institutions, customs and doctrines that shut out individuals or masses from the helpfulness of light and love, and consign them to those "dark places" which like Caliban's mind, are "habitations of cruelty."

But to the spirit once awake and enlightened the flesh-life, or the sense-wall, is no longer a hindrance; it becomes a help. "Thy whole body shall be full of light." This brings out the significance of the notable twelfth stanza of 'Rabbi Ben Ezra': —

> Let us not always say
> "Spite of this flesh to-day
> "I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry, "All good things
> "Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

The manifestation of soul may be obstructed by the organism, just as the growth of a seed is obstructed by the soil in which it lies buried; but, once the seed is reached by the warmth of the sun, the soil becomes its next best friend, since it gives foothold for roots and standing-ground and support for the rising stalk. So we.

If it be true, as poet and philosopher agree, that man is an epitome of the universe, holding compacted in himself a sample of its highest spiritual principles along with its material substances and natural forces, then there should be something in the universe to correspond to everything in man. But then only the higher things

of man should be taken to correspond with the higher things of the universe, as his delicate eye, and not his coarse lime-built bones, responds to the light. He can only commune with the spiritual order through his spiritual faculties and sentiments. So long as these are dormant, or weak, or dimly lighted, there is no help for it, — he will inhabit a moral cavern. Hence it is certain that the religious ideas of barbarous and half-civilised people will also be barbarous and half-civilised, graded like their attainments in language, science, art, medicine and government.

Three things I get directly from the poem. (1) It is a satire upon all who plant themselves upon the narrow island of individualism and think to reach completeness of character and culture without sharing the common life of the world. (2) It is a protest against the vagaries of the understanding, divorced from the deeper reason and the moral sense, — against what Hiram Corson calls "philosophies excogitated by the insulated intellect." The attitude and animus of what may be called unspiritual thinking are as fatal to rationality as to noble aspiration. But (3) chiefly, I think, the poet means it as a satire upon all religious theories which construct a divinity out of the imperfections of humanity, instead of submitting humanity to be inspired and moulded by the perfections of divinity. Caliban gives now and then a sign that he has some faint ideas of kindness, love, and justice, as well as of power; but these ideas, which ought alone to represent the Supreme Reality, are sullied, distorted, and confused by his own caprices of sensual impulse and wilfulness; and these caprices, which give form and colour to his imaginings, he incorporates into his theory of Setebos, making Him altogether such an one as himself, instead of making Him a reflection of the best, and so a reprover and corrector of his worst. For it is the office of true religion to help us distinguish between the higher and lower elements of our nature; and thus to develop and strengthen and

enthrone those by subordinating these to their proper service. This gives us a religion in exact harmony with reason, or common sense, whereby we discriminate values, or varying grades of excellence and dignity, and are thus enabled to give the leadership and command of our life to its superior principle.

Caliban, as you must have seen, is only one of our poor relations, and frightfully like us in some of his features. We Calibanise, then, when we make God "altogether" like ourselves instead of making ourselves like Him, as He is revealed in the higher self. If either Caliban or we should really be destitute and incapable of anything better than blind and non-moral impulse, then there would be no growing point; he and we should dwell permanently and by necessity in innocent darkness, or on the purely animal plane. But our escape upward into light and higher life, our evolution Godward, seems provided for in the germs of reason and conscience, though these be buried in the grossness of our animal nature. In short, man is capable of looking beyond and above himself for an Ideal Perfection, because such Perfection is hinted in his own aspirations. He Calibanises when the light that is in him becomes darkness by the overspreading clouds of sense and sensuality.

> Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Channing says we should seek to "become what we praise, by transcribing into our lives the perfections of God; by copying His wisdom, in the judicious pursuit of good ends; His justice, in the discharge of all our obligations, and His benevolence in the diffusion of all possible happiness around us." We Calibanise when we invert this process by transcribing into the character of God our own defects and attributing to Him qualities inconsistent with either wisdom, justice, or love.

We Calibanise when we impose our intellectual limita-

tions upon the universe. At every stage of enlargement our view is limited; but why must we mistake our own narrow horizon for the absolute boundary of truth?

And how about the dominant principle? Caliban, sprawling content in the summer mire, — is he disguised beyond recognition when he is seen revelling, selfishly and sensually, in elegant luxury, or given up to literary indulgence and

> pampering the coward heart
> With feelings all too delicate for use?

Does not science smack of Calibanism when it exalts the testimony of sense concerning physical facts above the testimony of consciousness concerning internal experiences; or when it fumbles for the essence of man's being among molecular movements and the processes of physical life?

And when we imagine that the universe is run chiefly in our personal interest or in hostility to us, how much we must resemble the creature who takes his own capricious likes and dislikes for samples of the Cosmos! When affairs go pleasantly, the god is in good humour. When any plan is upset, it is because the god has a spite against him. When the thunder breaks, his first impulse is to dodge the bolt that is aimed at his particular head. Not only in certain forms of religious literature and in hymn or prayer, may we hear the Calibanic tone of self-felicitation or of whining, but in how many of our daily moods we may detect some of the same colouring matter! But as one after another our pleadings for special divine interpositions give way before the larger conception of uniform causation, we fall in all our helplessness and need into the arms of a universal Providence, which takes up all beings and all events, all facts and all forces, all processes and all results, into the inclusive order of wisdom and goodness.

> When half-gods go,
> The gods arrive.

BROWNING'S THEORY OF ROMANTIC LOVE.

By GEORGE WILLIS COOKE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, October 27, 1891.]

The comparative method in the study of literature leads us to seek for the same ideas and the same artistic methods in writers widely separated in time and space. The reader of Browning's love poetry must find in it many a reminiscence of other poets, and he must now and then feel as if the age of chivalry had come back, with its fine and joyous sentiment. Love is not a mere passion to Browning, nor is it simply an affection that draws together one man and woman. In his poetry it is an intuition, an ecstasy, a spiritual vision, an eternal ideal.

Such a conception of love is not new with him; it is found in some of the greatest writers of ancient and modern times alike, notably in Plato, Dante, and Petrarch. We can better understand what love was to Browning, or what he has made it in his poetry, if we glance at what these men have made it in their immortal works. We find in these men what is known as romantic love, taking its origin in Plato, brought to its highest expression in Dante and Petrarch, and revived in a modernised form by Browning.

Plato discusses love in the 'Symposium' and in the 'Phædrus,' and he touches upon it in one or two of his other dialogues. In the 'Symposium,' he says that there is an earthly and a heavenly love; and it is the heavenly love which he describes in the romantic spirit. We cannot

forget that in his dialogues there often appears what is far other than a heavenly love; but it is the dark shadow which rests over all Greek life, and separates it widely from that of modern times. The heavenly love is that which desires the beautiful and good, which desires them as an eternal possession, and which seeks ever to bring to creation children of the good, that shall be to us, as it were, an immortal offspring of the soul.

Love is that mystical yearning for the beautiful and good, that contemplation of them with insight and joy, which makes them an ecstatic possession of the soul. Plato's conception of love he presents in the form of a parable, wherein he represents man as originally created by Zeus in the shape of a ball, with four hands and feet, two faces, and the rest in harmony. As man threatened to invade the very regions of the gods, so great was his terrible swiftness and strength, Zeus hit upon the device of cutting him in two; and thus the two sexes came into being. These severed halves are eternally seeking for each other, that the perfect whole may again be made, and the old joy and happiness realised. Love, says Plato, is the desire, the pursuit, of the whole, that the completed man may be attained.

In this parable, Plato would lead us to understand that man cannot exist in isolation, and that perfection can be had only by unity of soul. He finds this in what we call friendship, love of man for man, rather than in romantic love, or the love of man and woman. He also imaginatively proves to us that love is the great mediator, the eternal reconciler, between severed human souls. This reconciliation is yearned for with the soul's utmost intensity, because it is an anticipation, albeit indistinct, of an ideal union which will be realised in the eternal ages.

In the 'Phædrus,' Plato interprets love with the help of his doctrine of pre-existence, or transmigration. Those who love here are those who have been associated in the

former world, and have worshipped together the same god. Here Plato doubtless brings in something of the Greek conception that love is a divine ecstasy or madness, and therefore in some sense under the direction of a heavenly power. It is a mystical recollection, a reunion of those who have been long separated by the exigencies of their spiritual existence.

In these highly imaginative conceptions of Plato are the germs of romantic love. So surely are they there that every teacher and singer of romantic love has turned back to Plato for the philosophic interpretation of the human experience, which gives to such love its justification. It was not possible for such conceptions to lie wholly dormant until the time of Dante and the age of chivalry, in order to find an expression. These highly poetic spiritual insights of Plato gave to the Neo-Platonists the foundations for their airy structures of philosophic interpretation; and with them we find hints, now and then, of a finer comprehension of the meaning of love. At least, the old sensualism had passed away, and a yearning for moral purity had taken its place. Among the Stoics, in Plutarch and Pliny, we find some enlarging conception of the relations of man and woman, which show that Plato had not spoken in vain. With the later poets, especially the poets of the Anthology, we come occasionally upon some lyric, some love-song, some praise of a beloved woman, which shows most clearly that the conception of romantic love had, even as the first faint peeping forth of the colour of the rosebud, come to its earliest expression in the adoration of a woman by a man. It is so unlike all that has gone before in the Greek conception of woman, and the love between the sexes, that we cannot but see it is a new thing, of the highest beauty, born into the world.

How romantic love grew we cannot tell, though we know that the Teutonic adoration of woman was an element in its development, that the Christian conception

of man's spiritual nature and existence had its influence, and that other factors of mediævalism wrought upon it. We know that it came to its perfection suddenly, in the troubadours, in chivalry, and in Dante. Its consummate bloom appeared in the life and poetry of Petrarch, where we find its every element and its utmost capacity.

Romantic love is the adoration, or even more than that, the worship, of woman by man. It is not enough that man should love woman, that he should delight in her beauty, and that he should find his greatest happiness in her companionship, in order to the existence of romantic love. He must worship her; he must find in her something far above himself; he must take her word as his absolute command. One of the troubadours said that he would prefer to be with his lady rather than with God in Paradise. This is an extravagant statement of what all the poets and knights of the age of chivalry found in their conception of love.

Among the Greeks a woman of ravishing beauty was thought to be a manifestation of the divine, so that no harm could be done her, for in her some god made himself known to men. The Germans saw in woman a like divine quality, for she had the gift of divine knowledge, and a power of spiritual insight denied to man. It is this idea, clothed with the richest sentiment, made extravagant in an age of emotional fervour, that we find expressed in romantic love.

The mediæval interpreters of romantic love turned to Plato as the great teacher of its doctrines and its spirit; but they made the recipient of the love the source of inspiration rather than the lover himself, as with Plato. His mania they changed into ecstatic joy, so that in the worship of the lady they found an exquisite delight. Mulnhausen, one of the minnesingers, said of his lady, that when God made her he did not forget anything. He also said that he would prefer her even to the crown

of Rome, if he must choose between them. Not only did chivalry find in woman a living symbol of the highest purity and holiness, but it found an exquisite delight, an eternal joy and ecstasy of soul, in rendering to her adoration and worship.

In accordance with this sentiment, Dante and Petrarch attributed all that was pure and noble in them to the influence of the women they loved. Dante said that Beatrice had revealed to him all virtue and all wisdom. Petrarch blessed the happy moment which directed his heart to Laura, for she led him to the path of virtue, to cast out of his heart all base and grovelling objects. She it was who inspired him with that celestial flame which raised his soul to heaven, and directed it to the Supreme Cause as the only source of happiness.

Was Beatrice a woman, or divine philosophy, or a spiritual ideal? She was all three, and the last more than the first.

Dante knew what Plato meant when he represented the lover as seeking the beloved one to whom he had been attached in the world out of which they had come; but it was the peculiarity of chivalry that an actual woman became for it the symbol of its ideal. So we find Petrarch saying that it was not the person of Laura he loved, but her soul. He might have said that he loved her soul as the incarnation of the Eternal Love, and as the perfect ideal of the heavenly life. He does say that she pointed out to him the way to heaven along which she was his guide. Love transforms the lover, he tells us; and it assimilates him to the object of his love. He loved her alone; he suffered all things for her sake; he sacrificed all his wishes and pleasures that he might be more nearly like her, for in her he found all virtue and all perfection. It was fit that Beatrice should be the guide of Dante through the world to come, for she was to him a messenger of the eternal wisdom, a guide to that spiritual Paradise which

passes not away, because eternal in the heavens. Love was to the mediæval poet and knight a means of spiritual attainment, and a way of salvation truer than any other. It is by the means of love we are liberated from earthly thralldoms, trained for spiritual victories, and prepared for the freer communion and joy of the heavenly country.

After this glance at the history of romantic love, and at some of its poets and doctrines, we are prepared to turn to Browning for the study of those shorter poems of his in which the romantic spirit breathes out all its tender spiritual life. We cannot read 'Evelyn Hope,' 'Cristina,' or other of Browning's poems, without feeling that he has lived with Plato or Petrarch; and we know from two or three of his poems that he was familiar with the Provençals. He could not produce the old life or the old worship; no modern can do that in the manner of the mediæval poets. We cannot worship woman now in the spirit of Petrarch, for women are wiser than to permit it, even if men did not know better. We have found in woman an equal, not an inferior that becomes in some strange mystical way the symbol to us of the divine life.

Browning writes as a modern poet, reverencing woman, finding in her an eternal charm; because of her equality with himself she is other, weaker and yet nobler. Though a modern, the spirit of chivalry remains with him; and the very heart of romantic love he has reproduced in some of the finest of his lyrical poems. Had he been reading Plato before he wrote 'Cristina'? We cannot read it without feeling that it thrills with the echo of the far-off Greek voice that told of the struggle of man and woman to find each other, that love might make them one, and therefore make them whole.

Browning did not write 'Cristina' merely for the purpose of describing a coquettish woman, hard of heart, and careless of her victims. He wrote it in the spirit of romantic love, to sing the deep mystery which draws a man

and woman together, and which makes their long life an ecstasy of mutual comfort and courage. Cristina awakened love, but she gave no return. The lover found they were made for each other, that some profound spiritual affinity had linked them together, and that only in their love of each other could the true destiny of their lives be wrought out. Cristina saw the heavenly vision for a moment, knew that their souls were linked by ties of spiritual destiny, that they could never fulfil the true purpose of their lives without each other; but the world's honours, in her, trampled out the light forever. When the lover knows this, he turns away in sadness and pain to pour out his heart, but with the comfort that no failure of hers can hide from him the heavenly vision, or keep him from loving even where return of love is denied. Plato's conception of lovers as drawn to each other because of some mystic reminiscence of their past lives, reappears in this poem.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

In this poem, Browning is true throughout to the romantic spirit; for not only does he present Plato's reminiscence of love, that repeats what other worlds have known, but he shows that love is an intuition which reveals our spiritual

destiny. These intuitions come like "flashes struck from midnights," to show us the real meaning of our life, and to keep us in the way of the spirit's true endowments. The same doctrine of reminiscence and intuition is made use of in 'Evelyn Hope.'

In it we have the very essence of romantic love as a modern poet may draw it from the heart of Plato's 'Phædrus.' It is a spiritual bond that is woven in the providence of God, and that no discords or perplexities of earth can hinder from making the two know each other as one. This conception of love as an eternal union of two souls finds expression again and again in Browning's poems. The tragic element with which he deals is not the ordinary discord between mortals, but their failure to realise what belongs to them as spiritual beings. In 'Any Wife to any Husband,' the dying wife is struggling with her fear that the husband is not inspired with the same affection as her own, and that when she is gone, he will find comfort in loving some other woman. He may fail to know that love is the guardian angel of the soul on its way toward the higher life; and he may be contented with the passions and affections of the fleeting years, instead of seeking and finding that one true love which is destined to lift the soul out of the mire, and to be to it a shining light for eternal guidance.

In 'Two in the Campagna,' it is the woman who will not love; and because she will not, love's tragedy of passion and pain has its place in the lover's history. It is not only satisfaction of love which helps the soul to find its way upward, but the failure of love is a part of that mystic experience by which we are fitted for the life to come. The lover pleads with all the eloquence of his heart that he will do the loved one's will, see with her eyes, make his heart beat with hers, bow down to her and worship her, if she will but give back to him love that will be like his own. When he learns that she will not give herself as he

gives himself, he finds that, though he has failed of the love he desires, there yet remains

> Infinite passion, and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn,

and that even in these the soul finds purification and redemption. Well is it for the lover if he loves her out of a pure heart, even if love gives him no return of the love for which his soul longs above all other things. If in his love he has been base, how fearful is the shame, and how is he cast out from the presence of the being he has loved in vain! This is the thought of 'The Worst of It,' though it is the woman who has sinned, and not the man. The man has been cruelly betrayed, but he cannot forget that he has loved; and he still hopes that the future will in some way blot out what has been all evil here. He cannot forget, even though he knows how he has been sinned against by the woman he loved.

> Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
> Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
> Be happy! Add but the other grace,
> Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
> I knew you once: but in Paradise,
> If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

Even out of romantic love may grow a curse, because of the tragedy which ever lurks in its excess of sentiment and passion. The love of Mertoun for Mildred, in 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' is of the romantic type; but it did not give to him that soul of honour which keeps the lover from even the faintest suggestion of that which is ignoble. When he sings of his loved one, it is in the manner and spirit of the troubadour, —

> There 's a woman like a dew-drop, she 's so purer than the purest;
> And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith 's the surest.

Love which can sing like this may make false steps that lead to misunderstandings, and then to that tragic ending in pain and death, which is the consequence of sin.

Browning has depicted every form of love, and love under every circumstance. He does not confine himself to the romantic, or to the love which is a pure sentiment of the heart, or to that which is a deep intuition of the soul. We cannot follow him now into all the variety he has given to the strongest of all human sentiments; but ever we may find in his account of it the touch of his own romantic spirit. Above what is gross or cruel or tragic, lingers ever some light of the passion that soars heavenward, and that will realise in an eternal union of soul with soul that which belongs to man as a spiritual being.

Not only has Browning given us passion and tragedy, but he has also given us simple domestic affection, as in 'By the Fireside.' In this poem he shows what love may be, not in its romantic or its tragic form, but in its form of help to man and woman in the home. The lovers here are concerned mainly for what will help them to make life sweet and noble; and their hearthside is a quiet abiding-place of helpfulness and tender affection. They have not always succeeded. There have been misunderstandings, words that were spoken in anger, and withdrawal of affection when it was most needed; yet through all that has tried them, and made love more difficult, there has come growth of soul. The lover has found, through his experience, that life is a means of discovering himself to himself, of testing his own capacities, and of showing to others that which he can be to them. In this process of self-revelation, nothing is so important as love, which searches into every corner of the soul, and brings out everything there is in one. What the soul is, what it has learned, what it may become, makes itself known in any great experience that tries it to its utmost depths. Such an experience love always is to the soul, when it has in it any great reality of passionate yearning and aspiration.

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me —
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too.

This word out of Browning's own love-history, this description of his wife as she sat by his side, shows us what romantic love was to him as an element in his own personal experience. He said that

Earth is just our chance for learning love,
What love may be indeed, and is.

It was to him all that he had dreamed it should be in his early romantic poems. It was to him a romance; it had its tragic element of misunderstanding, hindrance, and pain; and it realised for him his utmost dream of its spiritual illumination and redemptive power.

His 'Men and Women,' the first volume he sent forth to the world after his marriage, shows how much love was to him, and how it had enlarged rather than lessened his conception of romantic love. In that sweetest and loftiest of all his poems, which he calls 'One Word More,' and with which he ends that book, he turns back to Dante and Raphael for such inspiration as is worthy, with which to address his wife. He recalls how Dante sang of his Beatrice, and how Raphael painted his Madonnas; and he longs for the power to make known the depth of his own affection for her he loves. At last he exclaims, —

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

Dante and Raphael drew on their imaginations for the women they painted, having the help of real women, it is true; but not contented with that they saw, they reached out of sight to find the perfect in the ideal. Browning has not found it necessary to go from his own fireside to find the Madonna of Raphael or the angel of Dante.

> Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
> Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
> Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,
> Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom!

And when that loved one of the "great brow and the spirit-small hand" had passed hence to some other world, her poet could not think of her less, or dream of her with other than the old tenderness. After many years, he found expression in 'The Ring and the Book' for the affection which had grown stronger with the passing years. It lived on with growing depths of yearning and reality, because it was not merely a love to the person, but a love for the soul; because it was a union of heart with heart in what is spiritual and therefore eternal.

It is the old romantic spirit which makes Browning invoke his wife, his ascended and transfigured wife, as the Muse which should inspire him as he wrote 'The Ring and the Book.' Therein he wrote of Pompilia, as a troubadour might have written of the chosen one of his song. He wrote with many a vision of her who had been once the inspiration of his life. Hence he invoked the loved one, who was now as near and real as then.

> This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
> Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!
> Never may I commence my song, my due
> To God, who best taught song by gift of thee,
> Except with bent head and beseeching hand —
> That still, despite the distance and the dark,
> What was, again may be; some interchange
> Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,

> Some benediction anciently thy smile:
> — Never conclude, but raising hand and head
> Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
> For all hope, all sustainment, all reward.

Some years later on, there came to Browning once more a reminiscence of his wife, and this time with reference to the reality of that world in which he had imaginatively found her as the Muse of his great poem. And curiously, he thinks of her still again in company with Dante. While they were together here he had written in her New Testament some words out of the Florentine's account of his Beatrice. Now he recalled those words as expressing his thought about the immortal life, and he wrote them to a friend for her comforting. Fourteen years before, he had written down these words for the eye of the woman he loved: "Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better, there, where that lady lives of whom my soul is enamoured." He recalls these words, and finds in them the true faith of his soul; for he could not think that death or eternity would separate from him her who had been to him the highest ideal because the most perfect vision of reality.

It is not the romantic love of Plato, Dante, or the troubadours, which we find in the poems of Browning. He has modernised it, and he has given it a character of his own. With him it is less sentimental, languishing, and sickly, has more in it of the true ring of life. It is quite as tender, as full of yearning, and with a spiritual vision as lofty. He is as little inclined as they to what is conventional in love, and to what is born of convenience and utilitarian considerations. He will make it lofty with sentiment; he will clothe it in forms of beauty; he will make it voice and guide his spiritual yearnings; and he must find in it a revelation of life and eternity.

The spirit of romantic love the world yet needs, that

man and woman may find in each other the oneness which makes them whole. Its sentimentalism, its extravagance of passion, its disregard for reality, should pass away, because they can no longer help us; but its tenderness, its chivalric fidelity, its imaginative yearning for a purer life, its lofty devotion and consecration, should yet remain with us, to make wedded life all that we desire. That can be realised to-day, not in the manner of romantic love, but by seeing in woman, on the part of man, a being that is other than himself, but yet his equal. She is equal in her individuality, which should command his respect, and which should be held by him in such honour as to be sacred and inviolable.

In the time of Plato, woman was the slave of man's passion; in the time of Dante, she was the goddess of his sentimental love; in the time of Browning, she had become the object of his personal esteem, loved for her own sake, and because he found in her a companionship which supplemented and revealed his own individuality. To Browning, as well as to Dante and Petrarch, love was a spiritual revelation. He saw in the individuality of woman that which made his own life richer, that which purified and refined his conceptions of personal being, and that which opened to him widening visions of spiritual experience.

Love is that passion of the soul which leads man to forget himself in the life of another, which shows him his most perfect existence in living for another individual, and which proves to him that he can in no wise save his soul except by losing it. Such love becomes romantic when it passes through the love of the one wherein life finds its enshrinement of tenderness and comfort, to the forgetfulness of self in the great life of humanity and service to fellow-men, and then on upward to spiritual love of the Infinite One. It is the revelation of the Infinite Love to our souls which makes any worthy love

of woman for man, or man for woman. When the love with which God searches out the heart of a man turns back to him through the love of woman, the expression of it appears as romantic love. It was such love which made Dante sing of Beatrice, —

> She goes her way, and hears men's praises free,
> Clothed in a garb of kindness, meek and low,
> And seems as if from heaven she came, to show
> Upon the earth a wondrous mystery.

BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART.

By DANIEL DORCHESTER, Jr.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, November 24, 1891.]

Philosophy and art are supposed by some people to be at variance; and they are certainly different in aim, method, and result. For the aim of philosophy is truth, the aim of art is beauty. The method of philosophy is critical reflection, proceeding from the known to the unknown by logical processes. The method of art is creation, or representation, transforming the ideal into the real, and the real into the ideal, through the fusing power of the imagination. The result of philosophy is a system that appeals to the intellect, and that explains or tries to explain phenomena. The result of art is a creation or "concrete representation, which, uniting matter and spirit, substance and form, real and ideal, into a complete organic whole, addresses itself at once to the senses, the intellect, and the heart."

But deeper than all these divisions is the union of philosophy and art. While it is true that neither philosophy nor art is at its best until it is free, and while each is supreme in its own realm, both emanate from a common source, and each lends to the other something of itself. Both are deeply concerned with ideas. The sense impressions of philosopher and artist alike are reinforced and transformed by the critical energy of mind. The artistic impulse would be without significance or strength were it not nourished by meditation; thought makes of the mind

of the artist a magnet, drawing to itself images and ideas, and thus enabling him to create out of the garnered wealth of his own soul and the universe. "Let no one hope without deep thought," said Plato, "to fashion everlasting material into eternal form;" and a modern writer with more fulness of truth has said: "More than the painter is required for the creation of great painting, and more than the poet for the exhibition of immortal verse. Painters are but the hands, and poets but the voices, whereby peoples express their accumulated thoughts and permanent emotions. Behind these crowd the generations of the myth-makers, and around them floats the vital atmosphere of enthusiasms on which their own souls and the souls of their brethren have been nourished." [1]

On the other hand, philosophy could ill afford to dispense with "the idealised and monumental utterances" of art, — its witness to the unity of man and the world, and its penetrating glances into the facts and principles of the spiritual universe. The result of philosophic work can never become generally current, or "dear and genuine inmates of the household of man," so long as they are insulated by the intellect, or dwarfed by dogmatic statement, but these results must be vitalised by the emotions and the imagination, and this is the peculiar work of art. Mr. Browning at the end of 'The Ring and the Book' states the philosophic content of that great and long poem in a very few words. He then asks, "Why take the artistic way to prove so much? Because it is the glory and good of art, that art remains the one way possible of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least. How look a brother in the face and say, 'thy right is wrong, eyes hast thou yet blind, thine ears are stuffed and stopped, despite their length: and, oh, the foolishness thou countest faith!' Say this as silverly as tongue can troll: the anger of the man may be endured; the shrug, the disappointed

[1] Symonds.

eyes of him are not so bad to bear: but here 's the plague, that all this trouble comes of telling truth, which truth, by when it reaches him, looks false, seems to be just the thing it would supplant, nor recognisable by whom it left: while falsehood would have done the work of truth. But Art, — wherein man nowise speaks to men, only to mankind, — Art may tell a truth obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought, nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word. So you may paint your picture, twice show truth, beyond mere imagery on the wall, — so, note by note, bring music from your mind deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived, — so write a book shall mean beyond the facts, suffice the eye and save the soul beside."

The greatest poets and artists have chosen this "more excellent way" of presenting truth, and are significant alike for the truthfulness of their ideas and the beauty of their artistic forms. "Ten silent centuries," it is said, found a voice in Dante, and "the truths to which he gave immortal expression had been slowly crystallising in the consciousness of the Christian world." Now, Dante was a student of scholasticism and a lecturer upon it as well. The passage through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, as described in his 'Divine Comedy,' is the thread for the exposition of his doctrines. It would be difficult to find in this poem a truth that cannot be found in the writings of Albert or Thomas Aquinas. But the poem is much more than a system of philosophy or of theology; it is a vision, at once terrible and inspiring, not of the mediæval world alone, but of the world of humanity, and the essential conditions of the soul in any country, in any age, on such a pilgrimage. Scholasticism may have furnished the warp for Dante's sublime weaving, but the pattern, the texture, the figures, the perennial significance, all that appeals to the imagination and stirs the soul, is due to the genius of the poet.

What Dante did, — transfigured scholasticism for the

"poor laity of love" to read, — a score of painters and sculptors sought to do in the first great period of Italian art, the period covered by Browning in his poem, 'Old Pictures in Florence.' More orthodox than Dante, dominated more by the church, and guilty, many of them, of picturesque infidelity, their work has not been so world-wide in its influence, or so significant to the modern mind. But in those days, when so few could read and there was so little for them to read, painting was in Italy the most potent means for the education of the people.

Hence, every great conception of the Middle Ages, dogmatic theology and pagan philosophy, Christian and pagan virtues, moral and political precepts, Biblical stories and monkish legends, saints and ecclesiasts, the bliss of the blessed and the misery of the damned, whatever was thought needful for the religious and civil life of man, was painted on the walls of churches and palaces.

Let us now consider the relation of Browning's art to the philosophy of his age. "The stream of tendency" in the nineteenth century is not, like that of the age of scholasticism, pervaded by a movement that carries all activities with it; it has many currents, and the main current is not always the same. There must be much interaction in a century so complex as ours; hence, the philosophic relation of such a complex poet as Browning can be determined only approximately. With the philosophic movement of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, Browning has little in common. It is too narrow, too mechanical, too materialistic, too destructive of the soul's freedom, to nurture a great poet. Mill himself fled for relief from his own philosophy to the poetry of Wordsworth; Herbert Spencer's suggestive phrase, "transfigured realism," is a confession of the need he feels for a more spiritual view of things. But the mind cannot be transfigured by a mere physical complement with vague suggestions of an Unknowable Force behind it. As a recent

writer justly says: "Herbert Spencer leaves matter and mind, nature and thought, over against each other without vital relation, without explanation, and without a clue to that Unknowable Something in which they somehow combine, and which somehow animates and explains them both." Or as Browning himself puts it in the person of the prophet John in 'A Death in the Desert': —

> For I say, this is death and the sole death,
> When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
> Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
> And lack of love from love made manifest;
> A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;
> A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.
> With ignorance was surety of a cure.
> When man, appalled at nature, questioned first,
> "What if there lurk a might behind this might?"
> He needed satisfaction God could give,
> And did give, as ye have the written word:
> But when he finds might still redouble might,
> Yet asks, "Since all is might, what use of will?"
> —Will, the one source of might, — he being man
> With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
> In little how the two combine in large, —
> That man has turned round on himself and stands,
> Which in the course of nature is, to die.
>
> And when man questioned, "What if there be love
> "Behind the will and might, as real as they?" —
> He needed satisfaction God could give,
> And did give, as ye have the written word:
> But when, beholding that love everywhere,
> He reasons, "Since such love is everywhere,
> And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
> We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not," —
> How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
> That he must love and would be loved again,
> Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
> Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
> The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
> Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

By far the broadest movement in the nineteenth century thought, the movement that has overspread and modified

all others, is the scientific. By the scientific, I mean a certain way of looking at things, certain methods of investigation and thought, rather than any specific system or theories; and, as such, it has been all pervasive; every kind of intellectual activity, even the poetic, has been influenced by it.

Browning has the scientific habit of mind, he has the critical scrutiny that examines from different points of view, sifts, and endeavours to approach more and more to the conception that represents the maximum of truth. Browning has also the enlightened curiosity for facts that distinguishes science, — the sympathy for old religions and civilisations, the hospitality to new ideas and theories.

Science has been "a precious visitant," indeed, to Browning, because she has "furnished clear guidance, a support not treacherous to the mind's excursive power."

In addition to the point of view of scientific realism, Browning has that of idealism, and employed his genius as an artist to give expression to the results of both. "He knows," says a recent writer, "the 'infinite significances' that facts have for thought, and how this significance comes of the mind's own laws and depths. He is, in a word, an idealist in the last resort. Behind the energetic realism and strong grip on facts is a 'visionary power,' and sense of ideas — convictions and passions that claim and affirm a world more real because ideal. He has the poet's ulterior, intellectual perception, the artist's sense of the reality of the ideal, the thinker's conviction of its spirituality. Aware of both sides of experience, and keenly aware of its real side, he yet seeks on its ideal side the clue to experience and to the unknowable elements of man's own nature. Of all worlds, to him the most real is the world of man's thought and passion.

"The beliefs and emotions, the characters and actions of men, the expression of man through religion and art, the revelation of man in literature and history — here,

indeed, is a realm of facts of most curious and profound interest, facts requiring and rewarding interpretation more than any other facts, and throwing more light than the whole body of physical knowledge on all that is of most value for us to know. . . . In an age of science mainly physical, he has maintained and illustrated the supreme interest and most real significance of man, not only to himself and with reference to every 'use' of life, but with reference to knowledge too. To this ground he has kept; from this standpoint and with this outlook all his work has been made." [1]

Browning's affinity for idealism has already been indicated. He is identified with a movement of human thought that is as old as Plato. His idealism, however, is not that of Plato, but that which owed its most modern impulse to Kant and his successors, and has been accelerated by the poetry of Schiller and Goethe, Shelley and Wordsworth. These philosophers have made the most successful attempts to reconcile what has been called "the three great terms of thought, world, self, and God," while the poets have sought to embody them in artistic forms. Neither has succeeded perfectly; indeed, the perfect reconciliation of matter, thought, and spirit will be the final achievement of philosophy, as their perfect realisation will be the crowning glory of art and religion. In 'Paracelsus,' in his sublime vision of a true evolution, Browning has foreseen this reconciliation. Thus God —

> Dwells in all,
> From life's minute beginnings, up at last
> To man — the consummation of this scheme
> Of being, the completion of this sphere
> Of life: whose attributes had here and there
> Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
> Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
> To be united in some wondrous whole,
> Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
> Suggesting some one creature yet to make,

[1] Henry Jones: 'Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher.'

> Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
> Convergent in the faculties of man.
> Progress is
> The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
> Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
> Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth
> While only here and there . . . a towering mind
> O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host
> Is out at once to the despair of night,
> When all mankind alike is perfected,
> Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,
> I say, begins man's general infancy.

Here are the steps of this reconciliation: God in nature working toward man, God in man working toward a complete humanity, and this complete humanity is "stung with hunger" for the divine fulness. Thus "nature," as one says, "is on its way back to God, gathering treasure as it goes."

Browning, thus interpreting God, man, and nature from an idealistic point of view, naturally discovered in art a deep significance. Like Kant and his successors, he connected art very closely with character. To Schiller, the beautiful was an intimation of the true and the good; art was a means to these. More exactly than any one before him, Schiller estimated the importance of the artistic feeling for the development of humanity. Hegel connects the three general forms of art, the symbolic, the classic, and the romantic, with the three essential stages through which the spirit of man must pass in its development. And Browning's art-poems are studies of character in certain forms and periods of artistic activity.

An art-critic, intent only upon literal accuracy, would not accept the judgments expressed in those poems without many qualifications. He would cite, for example, the frescoes of Andrea del Sarto in the entrance court of Santa Annunciata in Florence, — their great dignity, their fresh passion and imagination, as evidence that Andrea was more than the clever realist Browning has described. Sandro,

better known as Botticelli, is classified by Browning in his 'Old Pictures in Florence' with Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and Cimabue, but Botticelli was a pupil of Fra Lippo Lippi, who ushered in the next period of Italian art. Many such criticisms might be made, but they do not invalidate the truth of Browning's art-poems. His principle of classification transcends such minor distinctions, and is concerned with the exemplification in art of certain types of character. Andrea del Sarto, it is true, occasionally rises to a great dignity of expression, but the general level of his art, as of his life, was low, stereotyped, and sordid. Botticelli, though a pupil of Lippi, had a strong individuality, and belonged in spirit to the school of Giotto. Few painters have made every part of their work so tributary to an idea, or striven more earnestly after ideal beauty.

In the poem, 'Old Pictures in Florence,' Browning shows that romantic art in its crude form is superior to Greek art in its perfection, simply because it manifests a higher ideal of the human soul. He is not unmindful of the glory of the Grecian character and art. The very atmosphere in which the Greeks lived was pellucid, and their thought was like it. They had, too, an intense love of sensuous beauty, a love that a clear, translucent sky, blue crystalline seas, and each old poetic mountain "inspiration breathing around," so nurtured that it became their master passion. Naturally their thoughts became transfigured into images; the more vivid the conception, the more sensuous it seemed; indeed, thought and image became one. The spirit of man for a time saw its ideal realised in the grand and beautiful forms of the Grecian divinities.

But no sensuous representation, however excellent, could long seem an adequate expression to the developing soul of man. Spirit alone can satisfy spirit, and only in its own realm, the inner realm of the soul, can it find its true reality. In the decadence of Grecian art, in proportion as

there was a surrender to outer vision and as bodily charm was sought as an end, the human spirit turned its gaze inward and communed with its own loftier ideals. Philosophy dissolved the splendid Grecian mythology into a single, infinite, invisible divinity. Idea and sensuous image were separated. Then Christianity came, insisting upon the Divine Spirit as the absolute ideal, and glorifying the soul at the expense of the body, if need be. Christian virtues had no necessary connection with bodily symmetry and grace. A Greek faun must be graceful, a Greek god must be vigorous, but a Christian saint without any physical charm might be enshrined with glory. The Greek had no appreciation for such beauty as St. Bernard saw in his hymn to the Crucified One: —

All the strength and bloom are faded,
Who hath thus Thy state degraded?
Death upon Thy form is written;
See the wan, worn limbs, the smitten
Breast upon the cruel tree.

Thus despised and desecrated,
Thus in dying desolated,
Slain for me, of sinners vilest,
Loving Lord, on me Thou smilest:
Shine, bright face, and strengthen me.

But it was just such spiritual beauty as this that was the strength of the soul in this stage of its development, and it was the mission of romantic art to reveal this beauty.

Now let us turn to Browning's poem and observe how he distinguishes between these two stages, between classic and romantic art: —

When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* —
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

. . . . . .

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start, — What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
The better! What 's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.

. . . . . .

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?" —
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters:
To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?"

The degeneracy of art has always been characterised by a turning away from the invisible and a bowing down to the visible. The limitation and condemnation of all such

art may be found in the poem of 'Andrea del Sarto.' Andrea speaks of his easy mastery of his art: —

> I can do with my pencil what I know,
> What I see, what at bottom of my heart
> I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —
> Do easily, too — when I say, perfectly,
> I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
> Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
> And just as much they used to say in France.
> At any rate 't is easy, all of it!
> No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:
> I do what many dream of, all their lives,
> — Dream ? strive to do, and agonise to do,
> And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
> On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
> Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
> To paint a little thing like that you smeared
> Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, —
> Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
> (I know his name, no matter) — so much less!

But his ideal is lower than that of others who are not so skilful, and he feels that he falls below them: —

> Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
> There burns a truer light of God in them,
> In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
> Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
> This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
> . . . . . .
> Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth
> The Urbinate who died five years ago.
> ('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
> Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
> Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
> Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
> Above and through his art — for it gives way;
> That arm is wrongly put — and there again —
> A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
> Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
> He means right — that, a child may understand.
> Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
> But all the play, the insight and the stretch —
> Out of me, out of me!

In suggestive contrast to Andrea del Sarto stifling the promptings, "God and the glory! never care for gain," and squandering his talents upon pelf and popularity, is Pictor Ignotus, who chose to worship his lofty but narrow ideal in poverty and obscurity, rather than lavish his genius on the vain world. "Nor will I say," Pictor Ignotus confesses, —

> I have not dreamed (how well!)
> Of going — I, in each new picture, — forth,
> As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
> To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
> Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
> Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
> Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
> Through old streets named afresh from the event,
> Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
> My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
> Above his hair, lie learning at my feet! —
> Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
> With love about, and praise, till life should end,
> And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
> Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend, —
> The thought grew frightful, 't was so wildly dear!
> But a voice changed it —

the voice of his soul proclaiming a lofty, austere ideal, that had nothing in common with the popular fancy: —

> Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
> My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
> These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
> With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,
> With the same cold calm beautiful regard, —
> At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
> The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
> Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
> Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
> While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
> They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
> 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
> So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
> O youth, men praise so, — holds their praise its worth?
> Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
> Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

In Fra Lippo Lippi's earnest pleading there is revealed another important element in Browning's philosophy of art.

Lippi, a waif, full of sensibility, his soul and sense sharpened by "the hunger pinch" to the keenest scrutiny of the world about him, is taken, at eight years of age, to a convent, where he shows such a decided propensity for painting that the Prior, despairing of doing anything else with this erratic little genius, bade him daub away: —

> My head being crammed, the walls a blank,
> Never was such prompt disemburdening.
> First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
> I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
> From good old gossips waiting to confess
> Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, —
> To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
> Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
> With the little children round him in a row
> Of admiration, half for his beard and half
> For that white anger of his victim's son
> Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
> Signing himself with the other because of Christ
> (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
> After the passion of a thousand years)
> Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
> (Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
> On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
> Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
> (The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
> I painted all, then cried, "'T is ask and have;
> Choose, for more 's ready!" — laid the ladder flat,
> And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
> The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
> Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
> Being simple bodies, — "That 's the very man!
> Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
> That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
> To care about his asthma: it 's the life!"
> But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
> Their betters took their turn to see and say:
> The Prior and the learned pulled a face
> And stopped all that in no time. "How? what 's here?
> Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!

Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men —
Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . . no, it 's not . . .
It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe —
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It 's . . . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!"

The standard of art that the Prior held up was too narrow for the broadening spirit of human development. The aim of the artist had been the mere intelligible expression of the theme, generally a theological one, which he was commissioned to treat. In his treatment he suppressed, so far as possible, his own individuality, and made his figures look as unworldly as possible. And so long as the ruling style of painting was allegorical, so long as symbols were much in vogue and theological fidelity was more highly esteemed in the painter than picturesque fidelity, no disunion was felt between theme, artist, and form; these three were one.

But when the Renaissance with its rich and varied culture, with its revelation of a new value in man and the world, began to stir the soul of man, a significant change began. Pagan tradition teaching the value of this present world contended with monastic "other-worldliness" for the possession of the soul of man, beauty strove for supremacy with dogma, Art, conscious of her increasing power by reason of her improved technique, tried to serve two masters. She received her commissions from the church, professed fealty, but mingled pagan and Christian ideas in a way sweetly reasonable to herself, if to no one else, and bodied them forth in a manner which showed that her heart was with beauty rather than with dogma.

That is a very suggestive question the Prior asks Fra Lippo Lippi: —

> Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
> That sets us praising, — why not stop with him ?

Giotto had taken a long step in advance of the Prior's ideal. Giotto had little of the superstitious enthusiasm of his time, but much of the new love of nature. His themes, it is true, are much like those of his predecessors, but his style is not so formal and servile; he employs natural incidents and forms; his composition has a depth and richness that is almost modern. Compared with Don Lorenzo Monaco or even with Fra Angelico, "that late blooming flower of an almost by-gone time amid the pulsations of a new life," Giotto was a realist. Accurately stated, Giotto was an idealist, with decided touches of realistic treatment: only such a painter could have given the great impulse Giotto did to the sculpture of the Renaissance. Indeed, the other old masters whom Browning praises for their lofty ideal, Cimabue, Taddeo Gaddi, Sandro, the sculptor Nicolo the Pisan, and others, — these artists, sensing the Renaissance love of beauty that was dawning upon the world, humanised this ideal and gave it sensuous charm.

In the next great period of Italian art, the period ushered in by Fra Lippo Lippi, the artist was less fettered, he asserted his individuality more, and sought more earnestly for beauty in his forms. Luca Signorelli, for example, in his picture, The Madonna and Child, has painted in the background, instead of the customary shepherds, four nude figures, modeled in strong light and shade. This painting symbolises the character of that period; it shows how the Renaissance, though in outward conformity to the church, was luring art to the worship of beauty. What Signorelli painted, Fra Lippo Lippi voiced in his answer to the Prior's dictum, "Paint no more of body than shows soul." He argues: —

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint — is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all —
(I never saw it — put the case the same —)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

. . . . . .

You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
— The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights, and shades,
Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
— For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course! — you say.
But why not do as well as say, — paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works — paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip.

. . . . . .

This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

The gist of Lippi's speech is well expressed in Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh.' "Paint a body well, you paint a soul by implication, like the grand first Master."

Browning's distinction of objective and subjective poet in his 'Essay on Shelley' throws so much light not only

upon Lippi's speech but upon his philosophy of art, that it may well conclude this paper.

"The objective poet," says Browning, "is one whose endeavour has been to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain) with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow-men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction. It has been obtained through the poet's double faculty of seeing external objects more clearly, widely, and deeply, than is possible to the average mind, at the same time that he is so acquainted and in sympathy with its narrow comprehension as to be careful to supply it with no other materials than it can combine into an intelligible whole." This is precisely the endeavour and method of Fra Lippo Lippi. His saints are of our common humanity; his angels are "like great, high-spirited boys." His figures are drawn with such human feeling and grouped with such dramatic vividness that they easily charm the observer.

On the other hand, "the subjective poet is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not as much with reference to the many below, as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence who apprehends all things in their absolute truth, — an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees, but what God sees — the Ideas of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand — it is towards these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity he has to do: and he digs where he stands, preferring to seek them in his own soul, as the nearest reflex of that absolute Mind according to the intuitions of which he desires to perceive and speak."

This characterisation is just as true of the subjective painter, — it contains the essential principle of Fra

Angelico's art and, in general, that of the Old Masters of Florence whom Browning praises.

The subjective and the objective poet may be combined in one person; I believe that they were in Robert Browning; similarly the subjective and the objective artist were one in Raphael. And I come to the conclusion of this paper with the strong desire that Browning had written one more art poem, exemplifying how the idealism of the Old Painters of Florence and the realism of Andrea del Sarto, each alike one-sided and struggling for supremacy in Fra Lippo Lippi, became one in Raphael, a full-orbed artist, making the ideal appear more real and the real more ideal.

APPARENT FAILURE, IN REALITY, ULTIMATE AND SUBSTANTIAL TRIUMPH.

COMMENTS ON BROWNING'S 'THE GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.'

By JOSHUA KENDALL.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 22, 1892.]

This is a song of exultation, the glad outburst of man's spirit at the new dawn that is breaking forth after the night of the Middle Ages, — and which of us would not rejoice could a new morn arise on the night of his spiritual Middle Ages, — a dawn not merely in outward nature, that spiritual symbol which is offered to us daily and daily repeated, but in man's hopes and aspirations?

> Look out if yonder be not day again
> Rimming the rock-row!

The lofty peaks of intellect are the first to catch the sparkle, yet how gladly the chosen band, his followers, welcome the glow, as they climb the heights whither the glory draws them, though

> With [their] master, famous calm and dead
> Borne on [their] shoulders,

his work not ended, but shown forth, revealed in their glad ascension. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," said One, with whom, at times, at least, we feel somewhat akin. For it is a hero whose life is here extolled; one who spent a life in searching for truth, who would lead men from the low level of their lives "up to the morning."

What of his life? He was —

> Born with thy face and throat,
> Lyric Apollo,

and to know what that means, look at the cast of that Apollo, lyre in hand, in our Museum of Fine Arts as he steps forward in the full flush of youthful beauty — then "lo, the little touch, and youth was gone." But when youth was gone, and play was left behind, "straightway he gowned him," and he did not give up his task even when old age, baldness and blindness came upon him, when "Calculus racked him" and "tussis attacked him." "That 's the world's way." "Prate not," he said, "of most and least, painful and easy;" and, when friends, entreating, said, "But time escapes! Live now or never," he replied, —

> What 's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
> Man has Forever.

Had this man done great things? Judged by common standards, he had not; but yet great if we look at the quality, the thoroughness of his work. Life was, this life, for him, as for all of us, only a beginning; whatever is to be done, it were best to have it well done. He settled the meaning and the doctrine, say, of three Greek particles, at which some smile; but, as Browning informs us, this was "Shortly after the Revival of Learning in Europe," which was itself an important phase of the Renaissance, which, also, was one of the most important epochs in the history of the race. That revival started with the dispersion throughout southern Europe of Greek scholars who fled from Constantinople in the middle of the fifteenth century, who carried with them in their flight Greek texts which had been carefully copied: with their help attention was turned anew to the study of Greek authors, and was it not important that this revival of learning should, at its very beginning, be characterised by thoroughness and exactness?

I remember hearing Agassiz, in the zenith of his reputation, say, that should he die then, his contribution to the world's stock of original knowledge could be fully expressed in two lines of ordinary length. Granting that this very modest estimate were true, still we should feel constrained to add it would take many more lines than two, to set forth the impetus given by Agassiz to the study of Natural History in this country.

But a word about the importance of those little Greek terms. Turn to Liddell and Scott's lexicon of nearly eighteen hundred pages. Its editors call particular attention, in their preface, to the articles written by Professors Goodwin and Gildersleeve on particles no more important than ὅτι, οὖν and δέ, though no one of these three is there mentioned.

One may have, I suppose, a too great fondness for the study of words, and too great interest in them. They are used for a day, it may be, for years, or for centuries, and then thrown aside, unheeded and forgotten. They lie buried by thousands along the path of man's progress, imbedded in the layers of various languages, spoken or unspoken, at the present time, in countries all the way from the Caspian Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, like broken shells and cast up sea-weed on the shores of time. Still they have a wondrous vitality, or their roots at least have, and they often surprise us by a survival, or a fresh growth, when we least expect it. Pick out one of these roots, generally represented by three or four letters at the most, but whose hold on life far outlasts that of the grain which, some say, has sprouted, after it has lain for centuries in the tombs of Egyptian mummies.

Take from one of the large dictionaries the root *Steg.* or *Teg.* See how it keeps about the same form in language after language, — in Sanskrit, Lithuanian, Latin, Greek, Old Norse, Old High German, Anglo Saxon, and Scotch, and at last gives us in English *thatch*, *deck*, and *tile*, all of

which contain *teg*, whose meaning is *cover*. Were these roots something of man's invention? It hardly seems possible, but if so, perhaps the most wonderful of all his inventions. At Nineveh, Troy, and Rome slabs and fragments are unearthed with which to fill our museums; but in age, persistence, significance and interest, verbal roots would seem to surpass them.

The spirit that animated the Grammarian, his absorption in intellectual pursuits, the tenacity with which he adhered to his purpose, the thoroughness with which his work was done, the superiority of his mind over earthly limitations and finiteness furnish a fitting explanation of his followers' admiration for him. A triumphant justification of his life also is furnished by this proud funeral procession, such an one as no dead Cæsar was ever honoured with.

Examine the vocabulary of the first thirty-six and of the last sixteen lines of this poem. You will find them, I think, to be peculiarly choice and vigorous, and well fitted, in conjunction with the phrases in which they are imbedded, with the rhymes and the rhythm that float them along, to portray the fine enthusiasm that pervades the lines.

In the remaining portions, wherein is described the old man's appearance, whose form lacked aught that could attract the eye, the words and the style take on an archaic touch in harmony with the change in the theme.

We can imagine a Philistine, if such ever deigns to read this little piece, exulting while he reads the seemingly grotesque account of this "wretched old fellow," as he would call the Grammarian, and jeering at the strange subject of the poem, dressed as it is in this uncouth array; but the grotesqueness will be found to reside chiefly in the critic's own conceit, and the laugh will at last be turned upon himself.

We remember also that it was said of One long ago,

"There is no beauty that we should desire him," "and we hid, as it were, our faces from him."

In Browning's eagerness to emphasise the meaning of this poem, to make it so clear to us that we cannot mistake it, he quickly passes by the Grammarian's youth, and presents him to us old, bald, blear-eyed and stooping, racked by a cough also, in order to bring out more clearly the temper of the man, his tenacity of purpose and his spirituality, — a man who would admit of no coddling and would make no complaints, but left to God the

> Task to make the heavenly period
> Perfect the earthen.

When, pray, if not in old age, should mind rise above all ills and pains, and give us some hint, at least, of its divine origin? Have not two[1] rare souls, who had ministered to us before this Society, passed away this winter? And when had their mental activity and spirituality shown to greater advantage than just before their departure?

Did I say "a song of exultation?" Now that I look again, I see it is headed 'The Grammarian's Funeral.' Was I mistaken then in naming it as I did? I think not; for throughout the poem there rings a note of gladness, of triumph. How different this from the famous dirges of classic or of modern times, from Moschus on Bion, Virgil's Tenth Eclogue, Milton's 'Lycidas,' Emerson's 'Threnody' and Shelley's 'Adonais.' In all these, inasmuch as a dear friend taken away by death is the theme, grief at the separation, daily converse with a beloved one suddenly broken off, personal loss (and who can but sympathise with the mourners) is the point chiefly dwelt upon; but nothing of this sort is to be found in the poem we are considering; rather joy is expressed that a man has lived amongst us. Its spirit differs in this from Gray's 'Elegy' — just as if we were telling a friend

[1] C. P. Cranch, artist and poet; Rev. C. C. Shackford.

how some delightful stranger had sojourned with us for a while and graced our home and neighbourhood by his presence.

Well, perhaps Browning in this has given us a hint how to speak of departed friends, and that in a more appropriate way than we are wont. Whether a life is to be adjudged a failure or a success, depends on the standard with which it is compared, and the decision, when announced, commends or condemns the judge, for it shows what manner of man he is. An ideal standard is one that aims at perfection; in pursuit of that ultimate goal through a life, while there may be constant failure of gaining the end, there will be no failure in the life. What explanation is there of our life, except that we are here for our development, for our increase in love and in knowledge; and how can that be gained except through effort, through repeated failure and through trying again, — our souls "hydroptic with a sacred thirst" for farther draughts of what alone can refresh but can never sate us?

In one of the earliest and most precious of his poems, Browning traces out for us the career of one whose absorbing passion was to know. Paracelsus tells us that his aim was

> to comprehend the works of God,
> And God himself, and all God's intercourse
> With the human mind.

Connected with this aspiration there was, at first, a sublime faith in the possibility of ultimate triumph, — that he, Paracelsus, man's exemplar, could arrive at truth: —

> I go to prove my soul!
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not. . . .
> In some time, his good time, I shall arrive.

His failure, if failure it was, arose from his lack of love for the average man, a common vice of intellectual men. He "saw no good in 'men,'" he could not

> sympathise, be proud
> Of their half reasonings, faint aspirings, dim
> Struggles for truth.

In 'The Grammarian's Funeral,' the same theme, the pursuit of truth despite obstacles, is treated again; but there is this difference, as you gather from the villagers' love for and pride in the Grammarian that he loved all of them, that he spent his life for them.

Browning is unfaltering in his conviction that love is the one important thing in the world, the primal fact in the lives of all men. Poem after poem he gives us, showing love's many phases and its subtle power over us for weal or for woe.

In 'Childe Roland' there is portrayed an indomitable will that keeps the wanderer steadfast to his purpose. Whatever may be the "explanation," so called, of this poem, it is plain that a determination to search for one object until it is found forms the core of this Search for the Holy Grail, a search continued, despite rebuffs and disappointments, through long years and weary wanderings, undeterred by malicious leers and weird sights in sky and on land, and, just as all the comrades of his earlier years had gathered around him expecting to see him succumb at last, even as all they had done before him, it ends with a burst of triumph as he put the slug-horn to his lips and pealed forth his exulting cry.

The key-note to this poem is man's desire to arrive at truth, and faith in his capacity to attain it. Nowhere, perhaps, has Browning stated this faith of his more clearly than in this poem. 'T is his search for truth, though it be but elemental truth, his determination to know what he does know thoroughly and for that to spare no labour nor pains, that makes The Grammarian the admiration of his people. This poem means, in every line of it, that man can arrive at truth. In 'The Statue and The Bust' weakness of will makes a failure of two lives.

So much for Browning's attitude towards Love and Will and, in his earlier years, towards Knowledge. But later in life his accent becomes uncertain if not despondent with reference to man's power to arrive at truth; this weakness is shown, so far as I have observed, in the poems written in his old age.

In 'La Saisiaz,' he says: —

> Knowledge stands on my experience ; all outside its narrow hem
> Free surmise and sport may welcome.

In 'A Pillar at Sebzevar': —

> Knowledge doubt
> Even wherein it seems demonstrable.

We are

> sure that pleasure is,
> While knowledge may be, at the most.

In 'Francis Furini:' —

> Of power does man possess no particle;
> Of knowledge — just as much as shows that still
> It ends in ignorance on every side.

And he concludes with this sentence, — "Ignorance exists."

But to return to the topic from which we have made a somewhat long digression, — whether success in life is to be measured by achievement rather than by aim, and the way to look upon failure when it comes. If you want Browning as an authority on this subject, read 'The Last Ride Together.' Or read in the poem now under consideration: —

> That low man seeks a little thing to do,
> Sees it and does it:
> This high man with a great thing to pursue,
> Dies ere he knows it.
> That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit:
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit.

Let not defeat abash us. Recall Goethe's advice, waste not your time in remorse, but spend it in action. Longfellow has it: —

> Let the dead past bury its dead :
> Act, act in the living present.

A good old hymn renders it : —

> Forget the steps already trod
> And onward urge thy way.

Tennyson voices it,

> I hold it truth . . .
> That men may rise on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.

Turn we now to the question, what shall the standard be ? Consider this one, — "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." How ideal is that standard ! It seems too exalted to propose to mortals, and would be so, were it not implied that there is happiness in strivings towards it. It is very far off indeed, — "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Leibnitz likened the approach of the asymptote to its curve, which it always approaches but never reaches, to the approach of the human soul to God.

Pity the man who at the close of life can say, "I have done all that I intended to do." His ideal cannot be high who fully attains it. Browning says, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." Paracelsus is an instance of one who failed, but like Phaethon, child of the Sun, if he failed, he failed in a great undertaking. Does it not often happen that men, in their failures, accomplish more than they had proposed to do ? the result not just the same as they had striven for, but far greater ? Columbus did not discover a West India, such as he supposed, but a continent, — wholly unknown before. On many a field, ethical, religious, philosophical, the leader of a forlorn hope wins unexpectedly, and when his confrères even are dreading his discomfiture, they hear of a sudden his shout, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."

But what effect is produced on a soul that nurses a lofty ideal? Often it is made aware, as of necessity it must be, that the span of life is short and that numberless obstacles are interposed to its plans, when it would

> task for mankind's good
> Its nature, just as life and time accord.

Some give up their attempts in despair of aught ever being accomplished; Browning, in 'Sordello,' gives us their estimate of life, —

> Too narrow an arena to reward
> Emprise — the world's occasion worthless
> Since not absolutely fitted to evince
> Its [the soul's] mastery.

The impatience of reformers with the obstacles they encounter, and with the weaknesses and perversities of their fellow men, but expose their own limitations — they imagine that they should at once get important and far-reaching results; what they conceive of as a good, they would have realised at the moment; they would have a new creation, then, not an evolution: but that is not the way man progresses. God has borne with the wayward and perverse souls of men for many, many generations — are the reformers better than he? "Why so hot, little man?" asks Emerson. Every step in man's ascent is to be wrought out; otherwise would it not be worthless when gained?

Other souls again are wrought up to try to do what is beyond man's power; to quote again from 'Sordello:' —

> Or if yet worse befall,
> And a desire possess it [the soul] to put all
> That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
> Contain it, — to display completely here
> The mastery another life should learn, —
> Thrusting on time eternity's concern.

Now to neither of the two classes just mentioned, to those who are hopeless of doing aught in this life, nor to those

who would thrust too much upon it, did the Grammarian belong; he did all he could; he settled the meaning of three Greek particles, if you please, but he did that well; moreover, he did not bemoan his sad fate, as many would have done, while his work, his thoroughness, persistence and enthusiasm, all together, were a priceless boon to his generation.

But why all this talk? Is not all that can be said on our topic, and more, to be found expressed in 'The Grammarian's Funeral,' clothed in great beauty too? It seems almost brutal to pick it to pieces, and as with the botanist and his flower, to be justified only if it shall be better appreciated afterwards.

Let me say, here, that Browning has portrayed for us in the Grammarian, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Saul, in Caponsacchi and Pompilia, characters of richer ethical value, of finer and intenser spiritual fibre, than any that Shakespeare ever dreamed of.

The stage on which Shakespeare displayed his personages was, for the most part, an external one, appealing to the mind largely through eye and ear; Browning's presentations are mainly internal and spiritual, wrought out on an invisible stage, whose conflicts are far sharper and their issues freighted with subtler significance.

Not for naught have three centuries elapsed since Shakespeare's time: the world's ideals are loftier now than then.

> The growing drama has outgrown such toys
> Of simulated stature, face and speech.

It also may

> Take for a worthier stage the soul itself,
> Its shifting fancies and celestial lights.
>
> *Aurora Leigh;* Bk. V.

As in 'La Sasiaz,' 'Pippa Passes,' and 'The Englishman in Italy,' so here, nature is brought in, in full sympathy with the human element, responsive to it, and

showing, as ever, noble and beautiful just in proportion to the nobleness and beauty in the soul that contemplates it. How exquisite the lines: —

> Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
> Safe from the weather!

or these: —

> Here — here 's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
> Lightnings are loosened,
> Stars come and go!

Their lyric beauty is wonderful.

What had gained for the Grammarian the love of his people, whom we see convoying him aloft? I have said before, it was the glad conviction that he was their leader up to a higher level than before of thought and of feeling.

> Our low life was the level's and the night's;
> He 's for the morning.—

And when they get up to that famous peak where sparkles the citadel "circling its summit," they said, "Here 's his place," and left him there

> loftily lying
> — still loftier than the world suspects
> Living and dying.

THE UNCALCULATING SOUL.

By JENKIN LLOYD JONES.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, May 24, 1892.]

Prudence is a popular virtue. Caution is a grace much commended. Sagacity seems to win. Experience is a much travelled road that leads to prosperity. The practical experience of life seems to demand that the cost of every act be counted before it is perpetrated. It is apparently the province of the rational soul to calculate consequences and to shape its conduct thereby. These considerations are apparently growing more and more imperative. The unreliability of any other standard of conduct is being more and more confidently asserted. It is a matter of daily demonstration. The passions are often shown to be blind, the instincts treacherous, our impulses not trustworthy, while conscience itself often lands us, as it has landed so many brave souls of history, on the wrong side of many an issue. There is nothing more pathetic in the history of the race than the tragic story of right men in wrong places, noble souls unwittingly lending themselves to ignoble ends. To go outside of ourselves, the absolute dicta of bible, church, or state have been proven, over and over again, inadequate and inaccurate. The verdict of experience as well as philosophy points to the fallibility of the so-claimed infallible authorities.

And still, there is that which seems to be higher than expediency. We are compelled to recognise a force more

imperative than prudential considerations. We are haunted by the suspicion that there is a reason more commanding than any of our reasonings. There is in character that which is swifter than logic, more imperial than prudence. There seems to be a call in the human soul more fundamental and compelling than any arguments that the judgment can produce at any given time for or against a given course of action.

These distinctions bring before our minds two types of character, or, at least, two standards of conduct, two differing habits of soul. The first takes time, considers, reconsiders, experiments with itself, halts, trims, and then acts. This calculating soul must deliberately count the cost before it makes the investment of will and conscience. It asks to see the end before it begins. By it, instinct, impulse, intuition, call it what you please, is held in leash by policy, expediency, or that balancing of probabilities which he calls judgments. The other feels, sees, and unhesitatingly throws its destiny along the line of vision. It is indifferent to results. It acts regardless of consequences. Its only quest is loyalty to the vision given, and "with God be the rest." The uncalculating soul trusts the totality of being, that synthesis of life which constitutes the whole man. The conscience strikes twelve, not because this moment it has measured the angle of the sun, but because that inner mechanism of his being, the adjusted clock-work of the soul, pronounces it the moment of high noon.

No poet of modern times has penetrated more deeply the mysteries of the human soul than Robert Browning. His voluminous works may well be studied as a cyclopædia of motives. Conduct, both inner and outer, high and low, good and bad, of men and women, of old and young, he has studied, analysed, illustrated, and exemplified. To him then we will go for illustrations of the calculating and the uncalculating souls.

What a gallery he has given us of the calculating type, worldly-wise men and women, plotters and schemers, halting calculators, wise in their caution and cautious of their wisdom! So just has he been to their method, so true to their processes, that each in his turn almost persuades us. We find ourselves standing on their shaky planks of expediency. We are caught in the toils of their logic, and with them we attempt to vacate our intuitions, to split our promptings, to check our impulses, hoping thereby to arrive at safer results, and larger successes; or, if we ourselves escape capture, we are haunted with the suspicion that our author is at least on their side.

Turn the pages of Robert Browning and find the characters whose motto and method are well represented by the answer of Sparta to the Athenian runner, who burst upon them with the message, "Persia has come, Athens asks aid!"

> Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue at stake!
> . . . . . .
> Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment suspend.

In such a quest we find the accomplished Duke, who "gave commands," and "all smiles stopped together;" Djabal, the Druse prophet, trying to do the Lord's work with European tricks; Ogniben, the papal legate, carrying the politician's scheme into the service of the church; Blougram, clothing the logic of expediency with Episcopal robes; Sludge, the medium, trying to make whole truths out of half truths; Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau seeking to justify a crown with the arguments of "They all do it," and "You are another;" Domizia, a plotting woman, and — poor weak conscience, may heaven forgive her! — a scheming bride; to say nothing of the towering villain Guido in 'The Ring and the Book;' and the most intolerable rascal in all literature, the old man in the 'Inn Album.' The only flash of decency in his whole career is when he forgets to calculate and loses himself for a

moment in a wholesome burst of uncalculating love for the older woman when he meets her after the lapse of years.

Let us try to study this problem by a little closer grasp of some one character rather than an analysis of the many stories that would lend themselves to such purpose. Faenza, in the sixteenth century, as described in 'A Soul's Tragedy,' was a little dependent suburb of Ravenna, which, in turn, was governed by Rome. Into this town was born Chiappino. His was a soul sensitive "to the shadows," and he lost both his rank and his wealth through his persistent espousal of unpopular causes. He was a man accustomed to say, "You sin," "when a man did sin," and when he could not say it, he "glared it at him." When he could not glare it, he "prayed against him." When thus his part seemed over, he left it, trusting God's part might begin. His youth was full of alert discontent. He felt the people's wrongs as his own. He aspired to heaven but did not dare hope for it "without a reverent pause," growing less unfit for it. His prayer was for truth; his sympathies were for mankind. In their interest he resented "each shrug and smirk" and "beck and bend" that outraged their rights. This zeal for high causes gave him vision to see and courage to say

> I trust in nature for the stable laws
> Of beauty and utility. — Spring shall plant,
> And Autumn garner to the end of time:
> I trust in God — the right shall be the right
> And other than the wrong, while he endures:
> I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
> The outward and the inward, nature's good
> And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
> Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.
> I'll not curse — God bears with them, well may I —
> But I — protest against their claiming me.
> I simply say, if that's allowable,
> I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
> — God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
> Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse,
> Whoever loves, above his liberty,
> House, land or life!

Of course this brought him to a homeless, friendless, penniless condition, a proscribed and exiled wretch; but he had a friend who had grown up with him, one born for the sunshine as Chiappino was for the shadow. He was a

> Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
> Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
> A happy-tempered bringer of the best
> Out of the worst; who bears with what 's past cure,
> And puts so good a face on 't — wisely passive
> Where action 's fruitless, while he remedies
> In silence what the foolish rail against;
> A man to smooth such natures as parade
> Of opposition must exasperate;
> No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
> Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
> At lucky junctures; one who won't forego
> The after-battle work of binding wounds,
> Because, forsooth he 'd have to bring himself
> To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!

Luitolfo made friends as Chiappino lost them. He wooed and won the fair Eulalia, whom his gruff companion had also loved; but, owing to the many kindnesses received from him by his rival, he had never pressed his suit. At last this grim speaker of uncomfortable truths is to be banished. His sunny friend hastens to the Provost to intercede. While the successful suitor is at court, the unhappy youth, who, thus far, has been loyal to the inner vision, breaks down, becomes petulant, ungrateful. Ere he departs for his loveless exile, he whines his belated love into the ears of one who is betrothed. At this juncture, his friend breaks upon them in blood-stained garments with an imaginary mob at his heels. Luitolfo had lost his temper, struck, and, as he supposed, killed the Provost. Chiappino rises to the occasion as he promptly declares

> As God lives, I go straight
> To the palace and do justice, once for all!

He wraps his friend in his own disguise, points to him the way of escape, thrusts him out, and turns to meet the mob

coming up the steps with "I killed the Provost!" But the rabble were seeking their hero, not bent on vengeance. They wanted to honour him who had shattered their chains. They greeted their liberator. One exclaimed, for many,

> He who first made us feel what chains we wore.

Another retorted,

> Oh, have you only courage to speak now?
> My eldest son was christened a year since
> "Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind —
> Cino, for shortness merely, you observe.

All exclaimed,

> The city 's in our hands. The guards are fled.
> Do you, the cause of all, come down — come up —
> Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,
> Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
> The peril over, its reward begins!
> Come and harangue us in the market-place!

And lo, he who could defy the prison, live in familiar intimacy with adversity, die like a hero, fell before the temptations of success. The truth which, under the above circumstances, he told with painful promptness, he now withholds. He begins to weigh, to calculate.

> To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,

the prophetic soul of Eulalia anticipates the end of the sorry bargain and says,

> You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Thus ends the poetry of Chiappino's life. The remainder of the story is told in painful prose. We see halting attempts on the part of conscience to erect itself without *losing a good chance.* He begins to distrust straight lines, goes around in order to get there the sooner. This tangle is increased by the Pope's legate, one Ogniben, a Bishop Blougram written small, an ecclesiastic of the "good-Lord, good-devil" kind, as his name might indicate. This pious functionary rode into town upon his mule the morn-

ing after the uprising, saying, "I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts." In the presence of what seemed a great opportunity, Chiappino abandoned the principle of democracy, which had been the thought of his life, ignored the love of Eulalia, which had been the strength of his heart, and violated the friendship of Luitolfo, which had been his shield and protection. The callow prophet had been strangled by the oily rope of the politician. As his perjured and dishonoured form vanished through the north gate, Ogniben, the unctuous, could say, "Good-by to you . . . now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four*-and-twenty leaders of revolts."

The first and easy lesson of this story is that which flashed through the mind of Eulalia as she was waiting the approach of the mob which she supposed was coming to destroy her.

> But even I perceive
> 'T is not a very hard thing so to die.
> My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
> Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
> With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth
> Each evening after that wild son of hers,
> To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:
> How easy for them both to die like this!
> I am not sure that I could live as they.

There is never a scarcity of men who are willing to die for their country, always a scarcity of men who are ready to pay honest taxes and vote independently for their country.

But my present use of the story is to rescue the poetry of Chiappino's life from contempt. Prophets are so scarce that we should be thankful for fragmentary ones. So given are men to *temporise*, God be thanked for those who try to *eternise*, though eventually they should falter and halt. Chiappino's youth placed him among the malcontents, the uncomfortable, disagreeable class with which the

world finds it hard to get along, but without which the world would cease to get along altogether. History proves that God has high uses for those whom men can hardly use. He likes those whom we sorely dislike. Disappointing as was the life of Chiappino, still with our poet we should say,

> Better have failed in the high aim
> Than vulgarly in the low aim succeed.

It is hard to draw the line between the prophet and the mountebank. The idealist exposes himself to great dangers. Not abating one jot of the shame he brought himself, we find in Chiappino's character that which is related to things most excellent. It was well for those of Faenza that Chiappino gave to them the poetry of his life. He showed them the chains they wore. He, more than Ogniben or Luitolfo, was the forerunner of Kossuth and his compatriots, and the still greater one, yet to come, who will lift Italy into the freedom they dreamed of. He who sees the difference between things as they are and things as they ought to be and dares declare the difference regardless of consequences, belongs to that line of prophets who are God's interpreters on earth. Through these do his blessings go down the ages. While Chiappino's life was genuine, it was splendid, though disagreeable. We will not sneer at him, but mourn over his downfall. Browning calls it a "soul's tragedy." Dante defines a tragedy as "the bad ending of a good beginning." Oh, the pathos of a broken ideal! What pity we ought to have for a demoralised life! Shall we shudder at a mangled limb and scoff at a baffled soul? Chiappino is an acquaintance of yours and mine. Have we not had occasion to watch the disintegration of an ideal life in a young man or woman? See that boy, a very Childe Galahad, girding himself for the quest of the Holy Grail, breath unsullied, lips unstained by impure words, heart unsmirched by hatred. Twenty years later, note that same youth with breath laden with the impurities of cup and

pipe, lips familiar with words not to be spoken in the mother's presence. What a fall is here! All the more tragic if the plottings began in the interest of heaven, not hell. There is no degeneracy more demoralising than that which induces men like Chiappino to plot for God's cause, to be dishonest in the interest of righteousness, to lie "for Christ's sake," to scheme and compromise in the interest of progress and humanity. How sad is the depravity of the minister of religion who splits his utterances lest they be too well understood; who obscures the vision lest it throw too much light on the subject, and the collections be marred. Chiappino fell when he began to calculate for success, to buy efficiency. We will not reproach his dreaming. We will regret rather his waking. Through the cracks of the cranky life of Elias Butterworth ('A Minor Prophet'), George Eliot saw that something higher and finer than the calculating soul which prefers the near success and the far defeat to the near defeat and the far success.

> No tears are sadder than the smile
> With which I quit Elias. Bitterly
> I feel that every change upon this earth
> Is brought with sacrifice. . . .
> Even our failures are a prophecy,
> Even our yearnings and our bitter tears
> After that fair and true we cannot grasp;
> As patriots who seem to die in vain
> Make liberty more sacred by their pangs.
>
> Presentiment of better things on earth
> Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls
> To admiration, self-renouncing love,
> Or thoughts, like light, that bind the world in one.

For the fuller assurance that Browning was in sympathy with the uncalculating soul, the soul that is in league with the unmeasured impulses and the undivided promptings of the human heart, let us take a glimpse of that other gallery of his, of unsophisticated men and women, those of whom the hero at Marathon, who "ploughed for Greece all day"

with his plough-share, and then went home at night, forgetting to leave his name behind, may serve as type. Pheidippides, the runner, who ends his race with "Athens is saved," and "dies in the shout for his meed;" Ned Bratts and Tabby, his wife, that pair of "sinner saints," who, moved by John Bunyan's book, brought their load to the foot of the scaffold, relieved the burdened heart by confession, and then, because "Light 's left," Ned begged, "Make but haste to hang us both!" "while Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse, "Do hang us, please!" So, "happily hanged were they."

How the list lengthens, — the blue-eyed Breton; the artless Pippa; the heavenly guarded Anael; the ingenuous Luria, with his "own East how nearer to God we are;" Valence, the unsophisticated advocate; Colombe, who was first a woman and then a queen; and the valiant Count who "used no slight of the sword," but "open-breasted drove" till "out the truth he clove." These persuade us that the rattling Pacchiarotto is wiser than the cold and faultless painter, Andrea del Sarto, and that the irregular Fra Lippo is nearer to the truth and nearer to God than the halting Pictor Ignotus, that the gentle and unflinching Clara in the 'Red Cotton Night-cap Country' was purer than Constance, though she must say, "Ere I found what honour meant, I lost mine;" and we see that Miranda, the perplexed and unheroic hero of this book, was never less holy than when seeking holiness, "counting his sham beads threaded on a lie." Rising on this ladder of souls, we at last take our place and march by the light of the undeflected flame that burns in the soul of Caponsacchi, the courtier monk, who stood "guiltless in thought, word, and deed" because he saw there was no "duty patent in the world like daring try be good and true" to himself. We dare affirm with the uncounting Pompilia that

> Through such souls alone
> God stooping, shows sufficient of his light
> For us i' the dark to rise by,

and with the dear old Pope, we are glad to "know the right place by foot's feel," to take it and "tread firm there."

Let us again take a single representative, and that not an ideal one of the uncalculating soul as found in the Robert Browning gallery. Paracelsus, that strange, erratic doctor of the sixteenth century, was an incoherent, tempestuous man. His was a character full of painful contradictions. His life was blurred with mistakes and blotted with passions. He died a disappointment to his friends, and his memory has survived even to this day as a burlesque and a warning. But history is slowly justifying the inference of the poem that bears his name that there was a success underneath the failure. There is that in the story which makes for courage, which shows that it is better again to fail in a high undertaking than never to try. To his pleading friends, the young man, about to start out on his quest, says,

> What is it you wish ?
> That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
> Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
> Reject God's great commission and so die ?

This young man's sublime faith in his own dreams rises to such heights that to his dearest friends it seems but towering audacity. The logic of failure had no intimidations. He feared no god without sufficiently to interfere with his respect for the God within.

> The sovereign proof
> That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
> In living just as though no God there were.

To his friends who plead caution and moderation, he replies,

> Choose your side,
> Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not
> Because I dare to act on your own views,
> Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
> A peril where they most ensure success;

and this daring comes, not from a vision of the other end, but from a potency at this end of the line. He ventures upon what he knows as an unsolved problem. He says,

> No, I have naught to fear! 'Who will may know
> The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
> It be so? if indeed the strong desire
> Eclipse the aim in me? if splendour break
> Upon the outset of my path alone,
> And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
> Shall I require to my authentic mission
> Than this fierce energy? this instinct striving
> Because its nature is to strive? — enticed
> By the security of no broad course,
> Without success forever in its eyes!
> How know I else such glorious fate my own,
> But in the restless irresistible force
> That works within me? Is it for human will
> To institute such impulses? — still less,
> To disregard their promptings! What should I
> Do, kept among you all; your lives, your cares,
> Your life — all to be mine? Be sure that God
> Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!
> Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
> Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
> What full-grown power informs her from the first,
> Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
> The silent boundless regions of the sky!
> Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
> Their holding light his charge, when every hour
> That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
> This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
> I can abjure so well the idle arts
> These pedants strive to learn and teach.

In this audacious faith in himself Paracelsus went forth to

> Know, not for knowing's sake,
> But to become a star to men forever.

Of course, the knowledge he obtained proved nine parts ignorance. His light soon became a darkness on the face of the earth, but, in defeat, disgrace and sin, he never lost this high audacity, never ceased to believe that it was his business to perform his "share of the task."

> The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,
> To know that I have obstinately held
> By my own work.

Ever in his heart there was found, as in a "shrine, the giant image of perfection, grown in hate's despite." The outcome of this life was sad enough, gloomy defeat, sick humiliation, but he never deserved the epitaph written over those whose galleys went over the sea "With cleaving prows in order brave," namely, —

> The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
> To their first fault and withered in their pride.

Although he was compelled to render up his soul without the "fruits it was ordained to bear," he went, "joyous back to God," bringing no offering, sustained by the thought —

> So glorious is our nature, so august
> Man's inborn, uninstructed impulses,
> His naked spirit so majestical!

The irreverence of his battling soul breathed a piety. So splendidly did he trust his instincts, fight for them, die for them, that we can but feel that there was some fundamental integrity which would escape all "devil toil" and "hell torments" because

> He had immortal feelings; such shall never
> Be wholly quenched.

With Festus we join in the death-bed prayer, one of the most divinely audacious in literature because it represents the stalwart spirituality that demands fair play even at the hands of omnipotence. It insists that the eternal God should be humane, that he must be just before being merciful.

> I am for noble Aureole, God!
> I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
> His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
> I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
> As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
> Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
> He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
> His slave forever. There are two of us.

The glow-points of history are those where stand such uncalculating souls, they who counted not the end ere they did the deed. The heroes of the world are those who obeyed the divine propulsion without trying to anticipate results. He who would sink the flukes of his faith-anchor in a far future or a far past, knows not the inspiration of the saint. Faith comes through action. It waits no answer to its questions. It parleys not with expedience. It seeks no shorter route than conscience, no easier path than principle.

Chinese Gordon, the uncrowned king of the Soudan, was the Sir Galahad of the English army in his day. No more poetic and spotless illustration of faith is found in modern times than that given by him. With tireless disinterestedness he tried to be the Christianity his government professed. We are told the motto of his life was this, found in 'Paracelsus,' his favorite poem:

> I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not: but unless God send his hail
> Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
> In some good time, his good time, I shall arrive:
> He guides me and the bird. In his good time.

Gordon knew a fearlessness based on inward confidence. Said King John of Abyssinia to him,—

"Do you know, Gordon Pasha, that I could kill you on the spot, if I liked?"

"Perfectly well aware of it, your majesty. If it is your royal pleasure, I am ready. Do so at once."

"What! ready to be killed?" said the disconcerted king.

"Certainly."

"Then my power has no terror for you?"

"None whatever."

Whereupon the king, not Gordon, was intimidated. Like that "Threatening Tyrant" in Browning's poem, *he*

was afraid! Not glory, not victory, but duty, was Nelson's word at Trafalgar. "Ich dien" was Faraday's motto, which led him to choose poverty and science rather than wealth and luxury. It is said that Washington was filled with troops a whole year before Charles Sumner had ever witnessed a parade. His post was in another part of the field, and the angels on their grand rounds always found this sentinel at his post. "This one thing I do," was Paul's motto. "Here I stand, God helping me, I cannot do otherwise," exclaimed Luther. "'T is the old word, *necessity* is laid upon me," said Felix Holt.

Not only is this method of the uncalculating soul exemplified by the great, but it is taught by them. "The truly great man does not think beforehand that his words should be sincere, nor that his actions should be resolute. He simply always abides in the right," said Mencius.

Nature hates calculators. Only in our spontaneous actions are we strong. "By contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine," said Emerson.

"The wiser the angels, the more innocent they are," said Swedenborg.

"If we practise goodness for the sake of gaining some advantage by it, we may be cunning but we are not good," said Cicero.

"No inquirer can fix a clear-sighted gaze towards truth who is casting side-glances all the while on the prospects of his soul," says James Martineau.

You remember Victor Hugo's convent gardener who must needs wear a bell, as he said, "fastened to his paw in order to warn the pious sisters of the approach of a man." He is described as being "sorely tried, much worn by fate, a poor thread-bare soul, but still a man to act on the first impulse and spontaneously, a precious quality which prevents a man from ever being very wicked."

To return to Robert Browning, we are warranted by him in saying another thing concerning the uncalculating soul.

Its assurances make the disappointments of life trifling. It lifts one above his defeats because it recognises the truth, that to God, being is more than doing, purpose is service. For once, at least, the unctuous Ogniben approaches a gospel inspiration when he says, "Ever judge of men by their professions, for the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment of extravagant goodness, why trust it and know the man by it, I say — not by his performance — which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must with its accidents and its circumstances, — the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be, — not are, nor will be."

This is solace to the badgered soul. It is probably the most central thing in Browning's teachings. For this we will love him, if for nothing else, and if need be, in spite of everything else. Shall we not indeed give to Giotto credit for the spire that has never graced the Florentine Campanile?

'T is not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do!

———— *Saul.*

What I aspired to be,
And was not comforts me.
. . .
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet, swelled the man's amount.
. . . . . .
Fancies that broke thro' language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.
. . . . . .
All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.

———— *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen) —
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes!
Hence with life's pale lure."
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred 's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

A Grammarian's Funeral.

The last and best thing is yet to be said concerning the uncalculating soul. He is justified, not only in experience, but in philosophy. His method is scientific. His morality is based in law. This uncalculating ethics rests in and rises out of the thought of evolution. The man who follows the intuitions of his soul is wise enough to profit by the tuitions of his fore-elders. The insight of the prophet is the stratified sight of his ancestors. What they groped and toiled for and died without the finding are the happy promptings, the uncounted instincts, the inheritance of the child of to-day; the tears of the mother and the grandmother become the radiant joy of the children and the grandchildren. The Nile deposits five inches of alluvial soil upon the fertile fields of Egypt in a century, about one-twentieth of an inch per year. This soil has been probed to the depth of sixty feet or more. That is very

poor science that assumes that this year's millet crop is the outcome of this year's flood, though it might not come without the annual inundation. The millet has come out of this last one-twentieth of an inch plus the sixty feet of previous alluvium. This last one-twentieth of an inch is the conscious element in morals. That we may, nay, we must, reason about, analyse, weigh, calculate, and thus increase its fertility and importance. But the mighty potency of morals comes from the tap-root, sunk deep into unconscious inheritances that reach down through the dawn of civilisation, through the various strata of barbarism, through primitive savagery, into all the forms of animal and vegetable being. The soul's propulsion towards the right is related to the mute force that blankets with husks the growing corn and water-proofs the autumn bud for the sake of spring foliage and blossom. Conscience is akin to that strange prevision that teaches the bee to fill its winter cupboard and the squirrel to stock its granaries against the unyielding season, — a prevision that bee and squirrel know not of.

> I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> . . . . .
> He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

This is good science as well as good poetry. There is a common gravitation that holds plant, bird and man in one destiny.

> Across the narrow beach we flit,
> One little sandpiper and I,
> And fast I gather, bit by bit,
> The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
> The wild waves reach their hands for it,
> The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
> As up and down the beach we flit, —
> One little sandpiper and I.
>
> Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night
> When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
> My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
> To what warm shelter canst thou fly?

> I do not fear for thee, though wroth
> The tempest rushes through the sky:
> For are we not God's children both,
> Thou, little sandpiper and I?

There are those still reluctant to accept this inspiring conclusion, "God's children both, the sandpiper and the soul." They dread this divine necessity of law, admitting that Nature, by her methods, protects the winter bud, has tutored the bee and the squirrel, and has taught the bird his benign migration, but for the soul, they claim some peculiar, supermundane sources. Evolution? Yes, of course, all the way up to man, perhaps even including the physical man; but for morals and religion some special intervention, a miraculous lift, a supernatural revelation, is devoutly clutched at. But with the poet, I refuse to be disinherited. We cannot afford to sever a link in that chain of splendid being that unites us to all that is. I prefer a duty that reaches for its sanctions down through cactus to granite rather than that which is borne down from a heaven above on fitful gusts of incoherent revelation. The beautiful necessity which star-rays the snowflake impels me "to go prove my soul," and to believe that "in some good time I shall arrive. He guides me and the bird." The pregnant lines of Emerson's 'Rhodora' were as much a mystery and delight as the purple petals of the flower that inspired them, and the best the poet could do was to surmise that the same power that brought the one brought the other.

"Let us build altars to the beautiful necessity," said Emerson. All strong souls have been great believers in fate. Great was the reach of Newton's mind who saw the pull of the planets, the hunger of each for his fellow. Greater still is the insight of the poet who sees this pull of human nature towards excellence, the divine gravitation of man to man, the holy attraction towards the right, the thirst for nobility that blooms into conscience as a

manifestation of the same law, the working out of the same destiny.

"Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is a descending into us, — we know not whence," says Emerson.

I believe in the morals called intuitive because I believe in the tuition of eons of time and cycles of being that have produced them. I believe none the less in the ethics of reason, judgment, and discriminating experiments, because each generation is to add its twentieth of an inch to the splendid deposits of the centuries. Each age must add its verse to the bible of the race, "texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan." Nature pushed up through crystal, cell, plant, fish, fowl, beast, ape, and savage to Jesus. The conscience of Channing was the higher manifestation of the power that trailed the arbutus through the rocky glens of Massachusetts, and in the main, one force hides from consciousness, eludes analysis, as much as the other. The great deeds of the world are done in obedience to promptings as subtle and irresistible as that which impels the water-fowl through the trackless sky. "He guides me and the bird." Bryant ventured to anticipate the sheltered nest beneath the "bending reeds" as an incentive to the flight, but I suspect the bird did not know of the nest. It was haunted only by apprehension of cold. A mute impulse impelled it to fly, and in its flight, strange confidence in its wings grew. By flying came that splendid faith — there is no other word for it, — faith in God, "the evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for." This faith, born of action, is the most triumphant and commanding thing in the world. It makes a success of the man, howe'er his schemes may fail, and this halting distrust of a holy prompting, a scepticism concerning the wisdom of a right act, of the safety of truth-telling and truth-following, is the most disastrous thing in the world. It makes a failure of the man, however the scheme

succeeds. It may build a house, but it ruins the home. It may plant a mission, but it gags and kills the missionary. The triumphant faith rests, not on foresight, but upon the impulse born out of insight. Luther had his halting moments. He never had a very clear vision of what it was all coming to. There were calculating and faithless souls who saw the end of it all more clearly than Luther ever did. Indeed, in his old age, when action could no longer feed the fires of faith, Luther was tempted to say, "Had I known the trouble it would bring, I would never have touched it." But Luther in action, Luther on the wing, uncalculating Luther, would go to Worms, "though there were as many devils as there were tiles on the house-tops." He went "to prove his soul," never doubting but that, in his good time, he should arrive.

What a sweep "into the vast and unexplored abyss" did that gier-eagle of souls take, when he dared put his hand to the Emancipation Proclamation! What "full-grown power" informed him there in the boundless regions of the sky that "they sleep not whom God needs?" Abraham Lincoln is the most stupendous illustration in modern history of that fine climax in the aspirations of Paracelsus. There are

> Two points in the adventure of the diver,
> One — when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
> One — when, a prince, he rises with his pearl!

Thus has our poet apprehended what the scientists demonstrate. Poetry foretells what science comes to tell. The poet, by the "tougher sinew" of his brain, the more penetrating grasp of his mind, reaches the synthesis which his sure ally and best friend, the man of science, will, give him time enough, justify by analysis.

'Paracelsus' was first published in 1835, one year before Emerson issued his prophetic essay called 'Nature,' prefaced by the lines: —

A subtle chain of countless rings,
The next and to the farthest brings.
. . . . .
And, striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form —

twenty years before Spencer gave to the world the foreshadowings of his work, twenty-four years before Darwin published his 'Origin of Species,' forty-four years before the appearance of Spencer's 'Data of Ethics,' and nearly fifty years before John Fiske gave us his 'Idea of God' and 'Destiny of Man.' And still, without forcing the text, I think the careful reader finds the pith of all these books more or less clearly foreshadowed in this poem of 'Paracelsus,' written by a boy only twenty-three years of age, sixty years ago. Here we find, not only the doctrine of physical evolution, the overlaying of strata, the progressive series of plants and animals, but we find also strangely beautiful suggestions of the evolution of morals, the growth of spirit, and the crowning of the column of being with man's conscience as the authoritative, not infallible, force in the uncalculating soul.

Here we read of "hints and previsions of his faculties," strewn confusedly everywhere before man appears. Once descried, he "imprints forever his presence on all lifeless things," "the winds are henceforth voices, never a senseless gust, now man is born."

And still, the ladder of being mounts with an ever-increasing apprehension of man's passing worth. Not content with "here and there a star to dispel the darkness," here and there a "towering mind to o'erlook its prostrate fellows," this boy-poet sang of the time when "the host is out at once to the despair of night," when "all mankind" shall boast of "full-blown powers," then, not till then, "begins man's general infancy."

Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before

In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them, and joined with them.

THE VALUE OF CONTEMPORARY JUDGMENT.

By HELEN A. CLARKE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Dec. 27, 1892.]

Upon first thought the intrinsic value of contemporary judgment seems to amount to almost nothing: "Few things," says Mr. J. Addington Symonds, "are more perplexing than the vicissitudes of taste, whereby the idols of past generations crumble suddenly to dust, while the despised and rejected are lifted to pinnacles of glory."

These words apply with especial force to the change wrought in the critical attitude toward those great torch-bearers who lit up so gloriously the first years of our own century. During these early years there came into existence *The Quarterly Review, Blackwood's, The Edinburgh, The Examiner*, — magazines which, like Milton's Satan, had "through their merit been raised to a bad eminence," and "insatiate to pursue vain war with Heaven," discharged their critical office, as if all poets manifesting unusual genius were their natural enemies. All of us are, by hearsay, familiar with the awful terror of their weapons; but it is doubtful whether imagination has ever clothed the tradition in a way at all approaching the fatuous reality of their printed words. Like many critics of the present day when dealing with poets of the calibre of William Blake, George Meredith, or Robert Browning, they found the poetry of the Lake and so-called Cockney schools "obscure." Wordsworth's 'Ode to Immortality' was considered by *Blackwood's* a most illegible and unintelligible poem. "We

can pretend to give no analysis or explanation of it." So vicious an example of obscurity is it, that the reviewer has "every reason to hope that the lamentable consequences which have resulted from Mr. Wordsworth's open violation of the established laws of poetry will operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example."

The Quarterly made superhuman efforts to get through with 'Endymion,' and concludes, "We are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into." It wonders whether "Mr. Keats is his real name," for it doubts that any man in his senses should put his "name to such a rhapsody." 'Prometheus,' in the words of *The Literary Gazette* of 1820, is little else but "absolute raving. . . . A *mélange* of nonsense, cockneyism, poverty, and pedantry." And in the estimation of *The Edinburgh Review*, one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the Press had lately been guilty was the publication of 'Christabel,' whose author had "the monstrous assurance to come forward coolly at that time of day and tell the reader of English poetry, whose ear had been tuned to the lays of Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope, that he made his metre on a new principle."

Such criticism as this makes one feel like exclaiming, as Childe Roland did of the blind horse, "I never saw a tribe I hated so," and writing down all contemporary critics as a race specially scorned of Providence in the matter of penetration. But it must not be forgotten that the era marked by this extraordinarily vituperative criticism occupies but a small portion of the whole body of English criticism, and bearing in mind also the scientific method of proceeding so much in vogue at present, with its deductions based upon facts, — always facts, —we are warned not to come to too hasty conclusions. Only an eternity of Grad-

grinds in immortal conclave could definitely settle the question.

Though not able in the nature of the case to collect and sift all the facts, we can glance at a few and make at least provisional deductions.

Turning to the dawn of the Elizabethan Age, we find that criticism in our modern sense had not yet been developed, but there then flourished a race of critics of verse forms, who, not occupied with the individual merits of poets, were one and all bent on the improvement of English poetic forms. Puffed up with a little classical knowledge, they would take Horace or Virgil for their Apollo. The general surceasing of bald rhymes was determined upon; fixed rules for quantitative metre were to be adopted; hexameters were to reign supreme. Even the poet Spenser was touched by this fever for artificial improvement; but his natural genius happily saved him from going too far, and in one of his famous letters to Harvey, after some praise of the hexameter, he winds up, "Why a God's name may not we, as else the Greeks, have the kingdom of our own language, and measure our accents by the sound, reserving quantity to the verse?" In spite of the fact, however, that these formulators of cast-iron rules for the construction of poetry were opposed to such poetical practice as that of Spenser, they were not unconscious of his genius. The most rabid of the Hexametrists says, when speaking of contemporary poets, "I confess and acknowledge that we have many excellent and singular good poets in this our age, as Master Spenser . . . and divers others whom I reverence in that kind of prose rhythm, wherein Spenser hath surpassed them all. I would to God they had done so well in trew Hexametres, for they had then beautified our language." This reminds one of Miss Jenkyn's criticism, in 'Cranford,' on the author of 'The Pickwick Papers,' "doubtless a young man, who might do very well if he would take Dr. Johnson for a

model." Spenser was also mildly praised of Sir Philip Sidney: "'The Shepherd's Calendar' hath much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived."

It was quite natural that the romantic drama then growing up should be scorned by this new-old school; and every one is familiar with the wit and learning with which Sidney exposed its fallacies. Fortunately, however, for the poets of that day, their fame did not depend upon a scant word of praise uttered by the rhetoricians. We have a picture in that curious old play, 'The Return from Parnassus,' of the necessity devolving upon every poet of finding an aristocratic patron, who was generally to be bought at the expenditure of a little, or rather of a good deal, of judicious flattery. Once taken under the wing of a nobleman, the popular judgment did the rest, and the "scollers" found their grumbling of little avail. No doubt these same "scollers" flung their sneers at Shakespeare, — a fact also patent in 'The Return from Parnassus.' The University gentleman who wrote this play for a cultured audience might find it amusing to make his Gullio — an empty pretender to knowledge — the only one to "worship sweet Mr. Shakespeare;" but even while the cultured audience was laughing at the hit, the Universities (in the person of Francis Meres, who was Master of Arts of both Cambridge and Oxford, and Professor of Rhetoric in Oxford) had placed their approval upon Shakespeare. Sincerely appreciative is his quaintly worded praise, — "As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey tongued Shakespeare. . . . As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue if they would speak Latin, so say I, that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine-filèd phrase if they would speak English."

Such contemporary notices as have come down to us, with some few exceptions, such as Greene's famous "Shake-

scene" speech, go to prove the general estimation in which Shakespeare was held during his life. Though later Shakespeare idolaters have loved to enlarge on Ben Jonson's malignity toward Shakespeare, Gifford has shown pretty conclusively that the malignity was on the part of the idolaters toward Jonson, while the unbiassed reader will certainly find much more praise than blame in Ben Jonson's utterances upon Shakespeare. As he says of Shakespeare, we may say of his criticisms of Shakespeare, "There was ever more in him to be praised than pardoned."

By the time Milton appears on the scene, classical models have had their due effect. Gabriel Harvey would no doubt have hailed with delight Milton's blank verse, but alas! "It is never the time and the place and the loved one altogether." The poet who excelled in blank verse came too late for the critics who would have appreciated it; and we find him obliged to preface the second edition of 'Paradise Lost' with an apology for blank verse. But he was not altogether without contemporary praise, and from a very high source. Dryden, the great Mogul of letters, said in the preface to his poem, 'The State of Innocence,' that 'Paradise Lost' was "undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced." He admired it so much evidently that he thought it worthy of his own most august improvement. 'The State of Innocence' was the result, — a version of 'Paradise Lost,' which, as Milton expressed it, was "tagged with rhymes."

In Dryden and Pope we have the spectacle of poets who attained the widest recognition in their lifetime, — literary dictators, as some one has called them, poets who wrote in a school which was generally approved by the taste of the time, and which they may be said to have both reflected and led. Their successes, it is true, raised up against them a number of envious scribblers. But this was not an age when the poets died of criticism, as Keats is said

by Byron to have done; the bitterest invective of a disappointed hack could not compete with the terrible shafts of sarcasm wielded by a Pope or a Dryden. Whenever the poets gave battle to the critics on their own ground, the critics were worsted, and dispersed like Penelope's suitors under the bow of Odysseus.

From this rapid glance at a few well-known facts, is it possible to draw any deductions? I think we may at least conclude, even with this scant material, that before deciding as to the value of contemporary judgment, a great many factors must be taken into account. The popular admiration for Shakespeare during his lifetime has been developed by succeeding generations into the profoundest reverence for his genius; but no one would hesitate to say that when Meres wrote of him as he did, in 1598, he expressed a contemporary opinion of real and lasting value. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the consensus of opinion at the present time would ratify the popular contemporary judgment in regard to Dryden and Pope. John Dennis's opinion that the precepts in the 'Essay on Criticism' were false and trivial, the thoughts crude and abortive, might even find an echo in a modern mind.

In both these eras, however, the poets were decidedly in the ascendant; they did not make their *début* into the literary world under the chaperonage of the critics. Their appeal was direct to the public. But there is this difference between the two periods, — while the Elizabethan Age was not the forerunner of any school of criticism based upon it, by which the works of the succeeding era were judged, the classical era furnished the foundation of the future criticism, whose superstructure towers into the present. With the growth of prose, criticism gradually usurped the place of poetry as guide in literary matters; and when a new race of poets with new ideals arose, they were in the position of rebels against the established order

of things, and it was the duty of the critics, as the purveyors of taste, to warn all readers against these dangerous poetical anarchists.

Shakespeare in his day, and Pope and Dryden in theirs, depended, therefore, on the critical judgment of the "general" rather than upon that of a particular critic or school of critics, and that each prospered in his own day indicates that each was the legitimate offspring of his time.

I think, then, that from these illustrations we may venture as provisional deductions that when a poet is the outcome of a great age of spontaneous poetical activity, such as the Elizabethan Age, — when not only were the poets many and good, but the general public was largely receptive to poetical influences, — contemporary judgment is likely to be appreciative and therefore of intrinsic value; when the poet is the outcome of an age of artificial poetical activity, such as that of Pope, when poets and public are alike busied with the form rather than the spirit of poetry, contemporary judgment is likely to be exaggerated in its approval, and of lesser value; but when the poet is not so much the outcome as the prophet of a coming great age, and with ideals opposed to the art conventions of his time, contemporary judgment is unequal to the task of appreciating him, and is consequently of little or no value.

Yet even in the most unappreciative age, there were voices crying in the wilderness to announce its poets. Shelley as critic saw that "in spite of the low-thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit," his own age would be a memorable one in intellectual achievements. "We live," he says, "among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty."

There are numerous other factors which might be considered in a discussion of this subject, such as political

bias, personal friendship or enmity, the individual penetration of the critic, all of which would no doubt modify these general conclusions in many special instances, such, for example, as Queen Elizabeth's judgment upon 'Richard II.,' which she would not allow to be acted because a king was deposed in it.

The cases of valueless contemporary judgment which Browning has poetised in 'The Two Poets of Croisic' are especially interesting in this connection, as showing how unusual and fortuitous circumstances may bring about a meteor-like popularity for which there is no lasting foundation. It was not the poetic skill of René Gentilhomme that gained him his short-lived popularity, but a happy coincidence which revealed him in the light of a prophet. Popularity from such a cause could be gained only amid uncritical and superstitious surroundings.

The fictitious popularity of Des Forges through his sister Malcrais can perhaps be best explained by reference to that vanity resident in the breast of man, which was flattered, in the case of La Roque, by having a feminine poet, whose rhymes reflected the charming weakness of her sex, throw herself upon his tender mercy. Perhaps France, in the age of Voltaire, is the only country where popularity founded on such a basis would be possible. Picture the stern rebuff she would probably have received at the hands of a man like Fitzgerald.

Toward the latter half of this century we see a curious combination of conditions which admits of the culmination of the "Cockney School" in Tennyson, — for is he not the heir of Keats? — and of the beginning, and perhaps the culmination also, of a new school in Browning. Yet Tennyson, who had had the ground ploughed for him, to a certain extent, by his predecessors, did not escape the ill-natured censure of a "Rusty Crusty Christopher;" and how is it with Browning?

It is a widely spread tradition, on the one hand, that

Browning was never appreciated until the Browning Societies found him out; and on the other hand, there are Philistines who imagine that the amateurish idolaters of which Browning Societies are supposed to be composed have set themselves up against the authority of criticism. So much has been said of the criticism in a certain Review, which, when 'Pauline' first appeared, dismissed it in one line as "a piece of pure bewilderment," that it has come to be regarded as a sort of model of all early Browning criticism. But a survey of those criticisms which appeared before 1860 reveals the fact that there were a number which at once recognised in Browning a poet of extraordinary power, some even venturing to declare him the greatest genius since Shakespeare.[1] Of course there were those who grumbled, those who were silent; and as time has gone on and the poet's work has been more read, there has been an ever-increasing chorus of discordant voices, some appreciative, some the reverse. Neither upon Browning nor upon Tennyson does contemporary opinion approach to any degree of unanimity.

We are perhaps too close at hand to weigh the value of the judgment in regard to these two master-spirits of the Victorian Age; but he who runs can see, illustrated by the criticism on these two poets alone, that, with the growing complexity of life, criticism has become more and more a matter of the individual insight and preferences of the critic. The almost autocratic authority of a school has given way to the somewhat precarious authority of the individual; and as a natural consequence, contemporary judgment ranges through all degrees of value.

As the bulwarks of the old, authoritative criticism are crumbling to decay, there is arising a new order of criti-

[1] Among these appreciative reviews may be mentioned one of 'Pauline,' by Allan Cunningham, *Athenæum*, 1833; Review of 'Strafford,' *Literary Gazette*, 1837; Review of 'Paracelsus,' *The Theologian*, 1845; Review by James Russell Lowell, *North American Review*, 1848; Review in *Massachusetts Quarterly*, 1850; Review in *Christian Remembrancer*, 1857, and others.

cism, to which Browning stands in the closest affinity. One of the fundamental principles of this criticism is the relativity of all art. Posnett points out how no art expression in any age can be more than an approach to a universal ideal, subject, as it always is and must be, to limitations of time and place. The old criticism weighed every new manifestation in art by past achievements, which in course of time came to be regarded almost as divine revelations in art, rather than as imperfect human attempts to all-express beauty. This same principle of relativity is the touchstone by which Browning tries every realm of human endeavour, and the failure which he records everywhere is but a recognition of this all-pervading law of evolution.

A fine example of its application to art is to be found in the 'Parleying with Charles Avison,' where he says all arts endeavour to preserve hard and fast how we feel as what we know, yet none of them attain thereto, because the province of art is not in the true sense creative.

> Arts arrange,
> Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
> Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
> Construct their bravest, — still such pains produce
> Change, not creation.

In short, the province of art is to use the materials of knowledge, of which the *mind* takes cognisance, in giving outward form and expression to the creative impulses born of the soul. Knowledge being limited, art must also be limited in its capacity to all-express these creative impulses. What, then, must be the attitude of the critic?

He certainly must not expect to find perfect creations in art which shall be a law unto all time. His duty will be, as Symonds defines it, "to judge, but not without understanding the natural and historical conditions of the product under examination, nor without making the allowances demanded by his sense of relativity," or as Brown-

ing, with the finer human touch of the poet, puts it, he must bring his "life to kindle theirs." The critic in this school cannot dogmatically dismiss some poets as beneath his notice and claim kingship for others. Every poet, great and small, must find a place in his scheme of human art development. Unbiassed, he must look down from the lofty summit of universal sympathy.

With the light of the new criticism in his eyes, who shall say to what heights of value the contemporary judgment of the future critic may not rise?

BROWNING'S MASTERY OF RHYME.

By WILLIAM J. ROLFE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Feb. 28, 1893.]

Browning is unquestionably a great master of rhyme. Mr. Arthur Symons does not go too far in saying in his comments on the poet's metre and versification: "In one very important matter, that of rhyme, he is perhaps the greatest master in our language; in single and double, in simple and grotesque alike, he succeeds in fitting rhyme to rhyme with a perfection which I have never found in any other poet of any age."

This mastery of rhyme is shown, in the first place, by the fact that he rarely, if ever, violates the law which, as Sidney Lanier puts it, "forbids the least intrusion of the rhyme as rhyme, — that is, as anything less than the best word in the language for the idea in hand." George Gascoigne expressed it more quaintly three centuries and a half ago: "I would exhorte you also to beware of rime without reason: my meaning is hereby that your rime leade you not from your firste Invention, for many wryters when they have laid the platform of their invention, are yet drawen sometimes (by rime) to forget it or at least to alter it, as when they cannot readily finde out a worde which maye rime to the first . . . they do then eyther botche it up with a worde that will rime (howe small reason soever it carie with it) or els they alter their first worde and so percase decline or trouble their former Invention: But do you alwayes hold your first determined

Invention, and do rather searche the bottome of your braynes for apte words, than change good reason for rambling rime." It is seldom, if ever (except in cases of which I shall speak further on, where elaborately fantastic effects in rhyme are purposely introduced to surprise and amuse us), that Browning seems driven to use a word for the rhyme which he would not use for the sense. His words are such as he needs to express his meaning, and no more than he needs: there is no weakening of the sense, and no padding out of the verse.[1]

Browning's masterly ease in rhyming is also shown in the remarkable variety of his stanza-forms. He has more of them than any other English poet, early or recent; and in not a few of them the rhyme-structure is more or less complex and difficult. 'Through the Metidja' is an extraordinary *tour de force* in this respect, a single rhyme being carried through the forty lines. The repetition of "As I ride, as I ride," is counterbalanced by the "internal rhymes," so-called, — "Who dares chide my heart's pride,"

[1] Poets who pad out their verses for the sake of rhyme might well print the superfluous matter in italics, as a humble New Hampshire bard has done. I am the fortunate owner of a little volume entitled 'Farmer's Meditations, or Shepherd's Songs, by Thomas Randall, a Resident of Eaton, N. H.' (Limerick, Me., 1833.) In a poem on the birds, this couplet occurs (the italics are in the original): —

Their language was charming, 't was lovely and true;
Each sound was delightful, *and plain to the view.*

The following is from an elegy 'On the Sudden Death of John Hern': —

That voice that so often has thrilled on the ear,
By the call of his dog, *and the grasp of his gun,*
Those limbs, not oft weary, nor startled with fear,
Are cold now in death, and his voice is undone.

This is from 'Jesus Christ, the King of Kings': —

May Europe (*now in foreign lands*)
Soon burst *their* heathen, slavish bands.

The italics in *their* are apparently introduced (as in sundry other places in the book) on account of the liberty taken with the grammatical construction.

A stanza in verses 'On the Loss of Parents' is printed thus: —

Their sleep or slumber we deplore —
If sleep — *why do they never snore?*
Or turn or stir within their cell,
And prove to us that all is well?

"Do I glide, unespied," etc., — introduced in ten of the lines. There are thirty-six rhyming words in all, and *ride* is the only one repeated. In the 'Lovers' Quarrel' we have twenty-two seven-line stanzas, with but two rhymes in each, one being carried through *five* lines out of the seven. In 'Childe Roland' there are thirty-four six-line stanzas, with two rhymes in each subtly interlaced. Five-line stanzas appear to have been favourites with the poet for about forty years of his career, — from the period of 'Men and Women,' written between 1850 and 1855, to 'Asolando,' the latter volume containing five examples with three variations in metrical form. In 'Dis Aliter Visum' a peculiar and difficult internal rhyme (a single syllable between the rhyming words) occurs in each of the thirty stanzas: "Is that all true? I *say*, the *day*," "That I have seen her, *walked* and *talked*," "O'er the lone stone fence, *let* me *get*," etc. These rhymes come in so naturally that we should not recognise them as intentional in one case out of seven, unless our attention had been called to the metrical structure.

Again, this mastery of rhyme is shown by the frequency and facility of rhyming in what the recent Shakespeare critics call "run-on lines" in distinction from "end-stopt lines," the former having no natural break or pause at the end as the latter have. In Pope and the poets of his school we may say that the lines are *all* "end-stopt," the exceptions being too few to be worth noting. You may look through page after page of Pope's heroic couplets without finding a line that has not a comma or some larger stop at the end. It is this enforced pause at the end of each line, with the rare variations in the "cæsura," or enforced pause in the middle of the line, that makes these "classic" compositions so tiresome to our modern ears, accustomed to more varied rhythmical effects. We soon weary of the monotonous jog-trot of the "faultily faultless" iambics and the perpetual recurrence of the

obtrusive rhymes, their jingle forced upon our attention by the necessary pause after each. We can endure it for a hundred lines or so, but when it goes on for thousand after thousand, as in Pope's 'Iliad,' — aptly so known in popular parlance, for it is not Homer's 'Iliad,' — we cry with Macbeth: —

> What, will the *line* stretch out to the crack of doom?
> . . . I'll see no more!

Whether rhyme is doomed to disappear from our poetry, as a device suited only to tickle the ear in the childhood of poetical culture, — discarded with growing taste, as the child throws away the baby rattle, — I will not venture to say; but these heroic rhymes, so popular in an age that reckoned nothing "classical" that was not pedantically formal and artificial, have certainly had their day, — at least for long poems, or until another Browning appears. He has revived and revolutionised the heroic couplet, his amazing command of rhyme and of the more refined harmonies of rhythm enabling him to get exquisite music out of this old-fashioned jingle and jog-trot, and to continue it indefinitely without tiring us. Whatever we may think of 'Sordello' in other respects, we must admit that it is a masterpiece of rhymed measure. The "run-on" lines are so frequent that we hardly notice that they are arranged in heroic couplets. In Pope, as I have said, there is a point and a pause at the end of nearly every line; here not one line in seven is thus marked off. A person not familiar with the poem might listen to long passages read with proper emphasis and expression, and take them for blank verse. The same is true of shorter poems in the same measure. Take, for example, at random a passage from 'My Last Duchess': —

> Sir, 't was not
> Her husband's presence only, called that spot
> Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
> Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps

> Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
> Must never hope to reproduce the faint
> Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
> Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
> For calling up that spot of joy. She had
> A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
> Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
> She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

In many of the poems in other measures, the rhyme is similarly obscured by the "run-on" lines, though they are much shorter. Take this stanza from 'Count Gismond,' for example: —

> Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
> That I was saved. I never met
> His face before, but, at first view,
> I felt quite sure that God had set
> Himself to Satan; who would spend
> A minute's mistrust on the end?

Or this from 'In a Year,' where the lines are shorter yet: —

> Was it something said,
> Something done,
> Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
> Turn of head?
> Strange! that very way
> Love begun:
> I as little understand
> Love's decay.

In the following passage from 'Easter Day,' the octosyllabic couplets of which run so easily into jingle, we have eight successive lines with no pause at the end: —

> And as I said
> This nonsense, throwing back my head
> With light complacent laugh, I found
> Suddenly all the midnight round
> One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
> As made up of a multitude
> Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
> Of ripples infinite and black,
> From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
> Like horror and astonishment,

A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There —
Burn it!"

If anybody thinks this kind of rhyming is easy, let him try it. In the average verse of the day you will find the lines almost invariably "end-stopt." The ordinary newspaper rhymer seldom gets beyond that elementary form of his art.

Browning uses the "end-stopt" form only when the effect of the rhyme as rhyme is to be brought out, in addition to that of the metre or rhythm; as in 'Through the Metidja,' and in that finer because less artificial horse-poem, 'How They Brought the Good News,' also in the 'Cavalier Songs' and other songs, and in many of the humorous poems.

Certain critics have told us that Browning has many faulty rhymes, and a careless reader might easily get this impression; but the fact is that his percentage of such rhymes is smaller than in the average of our best poets. Miss Elizabeth M. Clark has furnished mathematical proof of this in her very interesting paper entitled, 'A Study of Browning's Rhymes,' in the second volume of *Poet-Lore*. She has found, by actual count, that in the 1096 pages of rhymed verse in the "Riverside Edition" (about two fifths of all Browning's poetry, the unrhymed filling 1572 pages), there are 34,746 rhymes, of which only 322 are bad, being either imperfect or forced, or both. This is less than one per cent, or one in a hundred. The list does not include "eye-rhymes," so-called, such as all poets — unfortunately, in my humble opinion — admit; like *dull* and *full*, *lone* and *gone*, *saith* and *faith*, etc. Of these I am inclined to think Browning has fewer than the average in standard poetry. A recent British writer, Mr. Joseph Jacobs,[1] puts it in my power to compare the proportion of Browning's

[1] 'Tennyson and In Memoriam,' by Joseph Jacobs (London, 1892).

bad rhymes with Tennyson's — at least with those of 'In Memoriam.' He finds in that poem 168 bad rhymes in 1448, or somewhat more than eleven per cent. He gives a list of these 168 bad rhymes, as he regards them; but on examining it I find that it includes many "eye-rhymes" (*move, love; most, lost; moods, woods; hearth, earth*, etc.), and certain others that are used by the poets generally, — even such unexceptionable rhymes as *again, men; hour, flower; fair, prayer; view, do; fire, higher*, etc. By striking out such as these the list is reduced to 48, or three per cent, and might perhaps be cut down to about two per cent. The worst of those that are left are *mourn, urn; curse, horse; put, short; one, alone; Lord, guard*, and *I, enjoy*.

Miss Clark does not give a list of the rhymes she reckons bad (it is a pity that she does not, as it would occupy little space if printed in compact form), but I presume that most of them are the fantastic double and triple rhymes which occur in a comparatively small number of the poems. As a little experiment of my own, with a view to a fairer comparison with Tennyson, I have examined about a thousand lines of Browning's serious verse, taking the pieces as they come in my 'Select Poems of Browning': 'Hervé Riel,' 'Clive,' 'How They Brought the Good News,' etc., 'The Lost Leader,' 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' 'Childe Roland,' 'The Boy and the Angel,' 'Prospice,' 'A Wall,' and 'My Star,' — the last three short poems being taken, out of the regular order, to make 1000 lines, — and, throwing out the unrhymed lines in 'The Lost Leader,' there are exactly 1000.[1] In the five hundred rhymes there are only fifteen (or three per cent) that are in any degree bad, and fully two-thirds of these are "eye-rhymes," like *watch, catch; mass, pass; word, afford; shone* (sometimes pronounced *shŏn*), *gone*, etc. The worst

[1] I will not vouch for the absolute accuracy of my counting, not having gone over it a second time; but I think it will be found correct, or nearly so.

are *quiescence, presence ; light, infinite ; comes, glooms ; dunce, nonce,* — on the whole, not so bad as the worst I have cited from 'In Memoriam.'

Miss Clark considers that all of Browning's imperfect or forced rhymes occur in these three cases : —

"First, when rough, uneducated characters speak for themselves ; second, when Browning is speaking about or describing such characters ; third, when he is speaking in his own person, evidently or apparently for himself." A simpler statement would be that these rhymes occur in poems or passages that are more or less sportive, familiar, or free-and-easy in style. As I have said, they are generally double or triple rhymes, and as Professor Corson remarks in his excellent 'Primer of English Verse,' the emphasis of such rhymes is "too pronounced for serious verse." He illustrates this by extracts from Byron's 'Don Juan,' showing "the part played by the double and triple rhymes in indicating the lowering of the poetic key, — the reduction of true poetic seriousness."

Of course, as Professor Corson adds, it must not be inferred that this is the *peculiar* function of such rhymes. "They may serve to emphasise the serious as well as the jocose ; " as in Mrs. Browning's 'Cowper's Grave.' The triple rhymes in Hood's 'Bridge of Sighs,' he thinks, "serve as a most effective foil to the melancholy theme," and are "not unlike the laughter of frenzied grief." I cannot agree with him here. To me there is nothing suggestive of laughter, or of frenzied grief, in

> One more unfortunate
> Weary of breath,
> Rashly importunate,
> Gone to her death !

The strain is rather that of tenderest sympathy and pity.[1] The triple rhymes are in keeping with the dactylic meas-

[1] It will be remembered that the speaker is not supposed to be a parent or near relative of the hapless girl, but a stranger who is interested in her fate only as illustrating one phase of the lot of womanhood in the great city.

ure, and are not markedly obtrusive. This dactylic measure, seldom used by our poets, is suited to quite opposite effects, — as in this poem contrasted with Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' or Longfellow's 'Skeleton in Armour.'

Similarly, double rhymes are used with fine effect by Browning as by other poets in serious poems in *trochaic* measure, especially lyrical poems; as in the exquisite song in 'The Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' "There 's a woman like a dewdrop." And this measure, like the dactylic, may be vigorous and stirring, or soft and lulling, or meditative and mournful.

In lighter pieces, like 'The Glove' and 'The Flight of the Duchess,' the effect of the double and triple rhymes is in keeping with the free-and-easy style of the narration. In 'The Glove,' as Mr. Arthur Symons remarks in his 'Introduction to Browning,' "It is worth noticing that in the lines spoken by the lady to Ronsard, and in these alone, the double rhymes are replaced by single ones, thus making a distinct severance between the earnestness of this one passage and the cynical wit of the rest." The critic might have pointed out a similar change to single rhymes in the gypsy's chant in 'The Flight of the Duchess.' The change, indeed, begins some ten lines before the chant, as if to prepare for it, — or rather, as occasionally in other parts of the poem, it indicates the transition to a slightly more serious vein in the old huntsman's talk.

'Pacchiarotto' seems to me little else than an illustration of the poet's mastery of rhyme "run mad." As Mr. Symons says, it is "a whimsical freak of verse, an extravaganza in staccato," and "almost incomparable as a sustained effort in double and triple grotesque rhymes." We may allow ourselves to be amused by it as a piece of boy's play, but, for myself, I must confess that I rather tire of it before it is over. Let us be thankful that our poet only now and then gave way to such rhyming foolery.

A BROWNING MONOLOGUE.

By GEORGE DIMMICK LATIMER.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 28, 1893.]

Ah, Clericus, what comfortable quarters you have! It takes a pastor to know the best pastures. With your permission I 'll throw a couple of sticks on the fire while you fetch the pipes. What 's this, driftwood! Well, in honour of my visit, you won't mind burning a few pieces. What a glorious blaze! See that green flame trying to escape! There 's a blue one chasing it! Look at these violet and dun-coloured rays faring forth! Those mad orange and red spirits of flame suggest the Brocken on Walpurgis Nacht. Are you the Faust for my Mephistophelian spirit?

Do you remember that poem of Robert Browning, I think it 's 'The Two Poets of Croisic,' where the friends call the flames after their poets and then watch their hold on 'earth's immortality'? A capital idea! Better in conception, however, than in execution, as is often the case with him. If the poem had been compressed, say, put on the smaller canvas of 'A Forgiveness,' 'Andrea del Sarto,' or 'Ivan Ivanovitch,' the imagery of those flickering flames would give it a place in every collection. But the story is spun out like Penelope's web. Like so much of his work, it 's over-elaborated, it suggests Hamlet's comment on an earlier writer, 'Words, words, words.' He starts out with that novel and brilliant image, and I must confess to a disappointment and vexation that the

whole poem does n't flash and sparkle like the driftwood on your hearth.

By the way, did it ever occur to you, Clericus, that Browning made very little use of imagery? I don't believe there are half a dozen really fine images in that vast collection of poetry! I expected you 'd look incredulous. As a member of the Browning Society it 's your duty to look disgusted, and it does n't require a clairvoyant to know you are just ready to say, 'Laicus, Laicus, you 're a cold-blooded critic, without any bowels of compassion, and at the first sign of disease ready to strap the sufferer on the table and cut off the offending member.' Well, I admit that Iago and I have one point in common. But the critic is as necessary as the artist. I shall never forget, however, your telling me that I was like a well-known Judge who always seemed vexed that he could n't decide against both sides. For a clergyman, Clericus, you do make some sharp speeches. But I have observed that most of you Browning students are like the adventurer in the Arabian Nights: he rubbed one eye with the magic ointment and saw all the treasures of the world; and then, not content, he anointed the other eye — only to become blind. It 's a good thing to have a critic about who can tell you when you 've rubbed enough. I mean it; I don't believe there are a dozen really fine images in all his poems; and I 'll prove it to you. Of course, when we speak of poetic imagery we don't refer to the common metaphorical language that is as much a property of our daily prose as it is of the *Transcript* poets. The poetical is not the prosaic whatever it may be, and the stock metaphors of the profession are the veriest prose. By poetic imagery we mean a striking impersonation, some wonderful similitude, the transference of the qualities of one object to another; something that at once arrests our attention, gives us a vivid picture, animates nature, personifies a passion, or paints man with the vocabulary of nature.

Take that striking image from 'Macbeth,' — and, by the way, a comparison of Browning and Shakespeare is fair because both are essentially dramatic poets, and surely you can ask no higher praise for your poet than to compare him with the prince of playwrights, — that image of Macbeth murdering sleep. It 's wonderful; that voice in the deep midnight crying,

> "Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep," — the innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care.

There you see in a flash all the long nights of agony and listless days of the conscience-stricken thane. That 's imagery unquestionably; that 's the product of high imaginative power: the power of either incarnating principles and passions or animating the natural objects about us; in a word, making the commonplace marvellous.

To be sure, that picture of the storm in 'Pippa Passes' is fine; as fine as anything in Shakespeare. I 'm glad you mentioned it. Have I got the lines right?

> Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
> And ever and anon some bright white shaft
> Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
> As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
> Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
> Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
> The thunder like a whole sea overhead.

Browning does n't use much imagery, but when he does it 's magnificent. That figure alone would mark him as a great dramatic poet. A marvellous picture, — those crouching figures and the lightning strokes slashing through the thicket in search of the guilty couple. Dido and Æneas were more fortunate in their rendezvous! Do you suppose Browning had Virgil in mind when he wrote this scene? It 's certainly one of the things he has done best, for he is especially strong when he treats of the unconventional. I think he preferred leaving tame people

for the tame poets; he evidently wanted foemen worthy of his steel, and the people he most delighted in disarming, stripping of all protection of plumed helmet and embossed shield, and laying bare and bloody at his feet are not the conventional but the erratic members of society. And his power lay in this masterly analysis of men and motives. His characters, as some one has said, have a glass integument and all the spiritual viscera can be seen.

Yes, that 's a pretty little image at the end of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology,'

> While the great bishop rolled him out a mind
> Long rumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

The figure of the cabin passenger fitting up his little six by eight stateroom is clever enough, but the strength of this strong poem is in the marvellous art of self-explication. The bishop, if you will permit the slang, 'gives himself away.' I always think of the poor fellow as hypnotised and forced to open all the closet doors of his life. And that 's a hard thing to happen to your profession, Clericus. We laymen (perhaps I should say the laywomen) put you upon a pedestal; but your own poet, Browning, lays you out on the table and dissects all your spiritual aspirations and æsthetic tastes until the heart of your mystery has ceased to beat. I think Browning was as rough on priests as Rabelais himself. He drew his monks with porcine or wolfish faces. Pardon the frankness, my dear fellow, but if you can't speak out of your heart before a blazing fire while this Turkish tobacco eddies away in spirals over your head, why, let 's for ever give up sincerity and be the well-bred idiots of conventional life.

You 're making a good fight, my dear fellow; that is a fine image in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra.' The potter's wheel is an old favourite. Ever since Isaiah set it spinning, the poets who took life seriously have given it an additional

twirl. I agree with you that this is the finest use of it. I read it with just as much zest as if Omar Khayyam had never seen it, and St. Paul had not made it immortal. Yes, indeed, that's one of his fine images. Remember, I didn't say there were none. I only insist that they're very few, and that we admire Browning for quite other things. Take the imagery of light in 'Numpholeptos,' or the musical figure in 'Abt Vogler': you may or may not understand them very well, but they show brilliant power. You remember that little description in 'James Lee's Wife' of the rocks by the sea?

> Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
> This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
> To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
> For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
> Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
> The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

There's something that will give the veriest clodhopper a new impression of nature, a sense of kinship he never had before. How true it is, Clericus, that the summer boarder is often the peripatetic teacher of æsthetics! And the poets perform the same office for us. They tell us what to see, and how to see it. They teach us to dilate with the proper emotion, like the Symphony librettos. Don't laugh! I really mean it. It was Whittier's 'River Path' that opened my eyes to the beauty of this our world.

Ah, you quote 'Fra Lippo' aptly. It's as true of poetry as painting.

> For, don't you mark? We're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.

Why, Clericus, people don't begin to know the world,

> The beauty, and the wonder and the power,
> The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
> Changes, Surprises, —

It disgusts me to see people straining every nerve to furnish a few rooms with plush furniture and Japanese *bric-à-brac* while the gorgeous temple of Nature is always open. But this is preaching, and my specialty is criticism! *Revenons à nos moutons:* I admit that Browning has some very striking imagery, but there is very little of it. Here 's the proof. What do you think of when his name is mentioned? Is it his imagery? No, it 's some grand phrase, or some vivid portraiture. Come now, what lines does his name suggest?

Ah, I thought so:

> God 's in his heaven —
> All 's right with the world!
>
> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me.

Good, go on.

> I count life just a stuff
> To try the soul's strength on.
>
> When the fight begins within himself,
> A man 's worth something.

Yes, of course you can go on for a long time. My lines are different, but they are still grand sentiments thrown out to an expectant multitude that feels but cannot express itself. For instance,

> God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her!

Or this,

> That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
> Lest you should think he never could recapture
> The first fine careless rapture.

There it is, Clericus; it is the sentiment that impresses us in Browning. Of course, he has plenty of the ordinary imagery that all poets use, the primary colours from which they get their more delicate hues or more glowing effects. But he cares a great deal more for what he is saying than

for the way in which it is said, and as a result, the finest things he has written are some ringing lines on man's faith and love and spiritual progress. Now, turn to Shakespeare and at once it 's the great imagery that looms before you. If you think of 'The Merchant of Venice,' at once you see the moonlight sleeping on the bank while the sound of music creeps into the ears, and the "floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold." The whole play of 'Julius Cæsar' is in the lines

> Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus, and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

Can you think of Cardinal Wolsey except in that great figure? —

> I have ventured,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> This many summers in a sea of glory,
> But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
> At length broke under me, and now has left me,
> Weary and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.

Does not 'As You Like It' instantly remind you that

> All the world 's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players;

and 'Hamlet' suggest,

> A station like the herald Mercury
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;

and is not Othello

> A fixed figure for the time of scorn
> To point his slow unmoving finger at?

But I might go on all night with such illustrations. Shakespeare has married the thought to immortal imagery. The sentiment may become withered and barren as the mortal whose wife forgot to ask eternal youth for her

lover, but the goddess of beauty pursues her way undimmed by age, ever fresh and immortal. There 's no such artist in words as Shakespeare. Why think of it, Clericus, Browning has undoubtedly written more lines, and yet how little is quotable! I mean by his admirers, of course.

There you sit, your head among the clouds, frowning like Jupiter Tonans. Well, I await the thunderbolt. If I 'm wrong I 'll admit it. Yes, it 's true that the figure in 'The Statue and the Bust' tells the tale,

> And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.

And that 's a fine image also in 'Paracelsus' —

> If I stoop
> Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
> It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
> Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
> Will pierce the gloom; I shall emerge one day.

But such imagery is rare. It does not immediately occur to you. Nor do you find in Browning many of those felicitous phrases that poetic imagination delights in: such as Shakespeare carelessly drops on the path of narration, "an itching palm," "a kind of excellent, dumb discourse," "the hungry edge of appetite," "marble-hearted fiend," "the glass of fashion," "a sea of upturned faces." Such poetic phrases are conspicuous by their absence in the modern poet. And where can you find single lines so fraught with meaning and filled with beauty as "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang," "One woe doth tread upon another's heel, so fast they follow," and, "He hates him much that would upon the rack of this tough world stretch him out longer"? Now, my dear fellow, that is imagery, and dramatic imagery. It 's the imagery of man in action, man dissatisfied, toiling, restless, suffering.

No, I don't think I 'm unfair; stick to the point, my dear enthusiast. We 're talking about dramatic imagery, and I turn to Shakespeare as the highest authority. We both agree that these few nuggets from that vast quarry are good specimens for study. They show us how to tell dramatic imagery; and I find in Browning very little indeed of such treasures. I don't expect to find all diamonds in the same setting; but a diamond is always a diamond, whatever the jeweller's art. And so I restate my thesis, that as we usually understand imagery, Browning has very little of it.

Oh, well, if that 's your revenge you 're welcome to it. It 's not a bad story. It may be that I do resemble that well-known free-trader who said to his students one day that he had been asked to state some of the arguments for Protection, and that he would be glad to do so if there were any. But I leave it to you, if it is not considerable of an effort for you to find brilliant, suggestive imagery in all those volumes of verse. The rough ore is there in great abundance. It 's like the Koh-i-noor before cutting and polishing. But if whole paragraphs of argument had been compressed into metaphor and simile we should have imagery only second to that of Shakespeare.

Oh, yes, indeed; certainly imagery has a larger meaning than mere similitude. It covers more than simile and metaphor. I admit that it can include vivid description, artistic portraiture; in fact, any image or picture or representation the poet paints for us. For this very purpose the poet is of 'imagination all compact.' Your contention is, as I understand it, that those striking portraits he has painted in 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' 'My Last Duchess,' 'A Forgiveness,' 'Andrea del Sarto,' 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,' 'Ivan Ivanovitch,' and all the others, abound in imagery, and that the imagery is that of vivid description, an enduring image, to delight the mind. Well, well! they are works of imagination, to be sure, as 'Hamlet' and

'Othello' are, as 'The Scarlet Letter' and 'Anna Karénina' are. And imagery is the product of the imagination. But I don't know that vivid description is necessarily imagery. I think that there 's a distinction somewhere. Vivid description generally means realism, a scientific rather than a poetic treatment. Where 's some prose? Just the thing; take this little story of De Maupassant's 'The Confession;' here we shall find a clearly drawn picture. Let me read it to you. You remember the old Marguérite was dying, and could not rest until she confessed the murder of her sister's lover many, many years ago when she was but a little girl.

"'There, dost thou know what I did? Listen. I had seen the gardener making little balls to kill strange dogs. He powdered up a bottle with a stone and put the powdered glass in a little ball of meat. I took a little medicine bottle that mamma had; I broke it small with a hammer, and I hid the glass in my pocket. It was a shining powder. The next day, as soon as you had made the little cakes, I split them with a knife and I put in the glass — He ate three of them — I too, I ate one — I threw the other six into the pond. The two swans died three days after — Dost thou remember? Oh, say nothing — Listen, listen. I, I alone did not die, but I have always been sick. Listen.' — She was silent, and remained panting, always scratching the sheet with her withered nails."

It 's horrible, is n't it? I think I see the old woman clutching the sheets and gasping for breath while she breaks her sister's heart. It 's just such a picture as Browning gives us in 'My Last Duchess,' 'A Forgiveness,' 'The Laboratory,' and similar poems. It 's vivid enough, Heaven knows, and there 's a new picture indelibly stamped on our mind. But it 's the realism that does it. Here 's a line or two from 'A Forgiveness.'

"Would my blood for ink suffice?"
"It may; this minion from a land of spice,

Silk, feather — every bird of jewelled breast, —
This poignard's beauty, ne'er so lightly prest
Above your heart there."
"Thus?"
"It flows, I see.
Dip there the point and write!"
. . . . . .
She died ere morning; then I saw how pale
Her cheek was ere it wore day's paint disguise,
And what a hollow darkened 'neath her eyes,
Now that I used my own. She sleeps, as erst
Beloved, in this your church: ay, yours!

In these pictures it 's the attention to detail that is remarkable. Browning is not an impressionist who ropes off his picture and insists upon the long perspective for his splashes of colour. His work is microscopic in its nature; you may stand in front of the painting and use your lorgnette as much as you will. But there is very little imagery there. Analyse such a poem as 'A Forgiveness,' and you will see that its power is due to three causes: first, its thrilling story; second, its dramatic form; third, the fulness of detail. Browning is a realist, that is, he gives you abundance of details. I think you observe this more clearly if you compare 'A Forgiveness' with 'My Last Duchess.' The subjects are similar, the treatment similar. But 'My Last Duchess' is the greater poem because there are fewer details. Suggestion overpowers description. It 's a gem for a royal collection. Its value lies in the dramatic situation, the vivid description and the concentration of power. It 's a work of the imagination; but it has no imagery. You can't call a whole poem imagery. It 's a portrait, a picture, an image, but not imagery.

I don't see why you should feel vexed. I do have the appreciative spirit. I admire Browning. My wife makes me go to church with her Sunday morning (pardon the frankness, my dear fellow), but in the evening she plays Wagner and I read Browning. I like those Venetian

beauties and their imperious lords. Those were days when married men had some rights their wives were bound to respect. The advanced woman was not then evolved. Browning is a great artist and in nothing is his art more evident than in these little dramatic poems, portraits of lawless men and more lawless women. But his gift is his power to breathe the breath of life into them. They live, they move, they speak. Sometimes, they talk too much; that 's the danger of clever people. Macaulay was often called to order by Lady Holland, and, as a rule, their admirers preferred Coleridge, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Landor, and Dr. Johnson in small doses. Even the lovely Pompilia and the good old Pope talk too much, while Sludge and Blougram, Pamphylax, Fra Lippi, and dear David, too, tax our patience. But still, it is the monologue Browning uses so effectively that is the principal charm of the poems. It 's easily verified. Analyse the poems and it 's their dramatic form and realistic touches that impress you. You remember the thrilling story, but rarely are there special lines or words of description that linger in the memory.

My dear fellow, you ought to have been a lawyer. Your pertinacity is equal to mine. Come, I 'll give you a desk in my office and we 'll hang out a fresh shingle, — Clericus and Laicus, Attorneys at Law, and Adjudicators *in Causas hereticas*. Of course there 's a great difference between the restrained description of 'My Last Duchess' and the abounding details, the picturesque descriptions of nature, as in 'Saul' for instance. You claim that those beautiful ringing lines of the pastoral life of David and again the hunter's joys and the picture of the new earth as David stole tentward in the early dawn, weary, awed and exultant from his struggle with death, are imagery of a high order. Well! you press me hard, I admit it. It is ornament to the narrative. A description of nature, or of man, that embellishes, enhances, enriches

a story that is being told, is, of course, imagery. The description of the furniture, weapons, social life of husband and wife in 'A Forgiveness' is not imagery, but merely the details of a circumstantial narrative. Nature, as described in 'Saul,' and more especially in 'Childe Roland,' is animated in the first place, and in the second place distinctively used for the enrichment of the poem. I have been talking, you know my habit, to clear my own thought. Imagery, I think, is rather a vague word with us. It 's not imagination, but one of the products of imagination. "Imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown." Imagery is the decorated drapery put upon the forms. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is a work of imagination, and such lines in it as

> The rude sea grew civil at her song,
> And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maid's music

are imagery. Of this imagery Browning has given us very little; some very fine lines, however, which we could ill spare, as for instance,

> I crossed a ridge of short, sharp, broken hills,
> Like an old lion's cheek teeth;

and that line from 'One Word More'

> like some portent of an ice berg
> Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
> Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals,

and then that very well-known one,

> She lies in my hand as tame
> As a pear late basking over a wall;
> Just a touch to try and off it came.

As I say, there 's very little of this magical touch that Shakespeare had in perfection. But 'Childe Roland' even better than 'Saul' or 'James Lee's Wife' has a fine animated description of nature that is imagery of a high order. Browning is one of the great masters of imaginative litera-

ture, and 'Childe Roland,' in dramatic interest, in vivid portrayal, and in the confusion of the natural and the supernatural, ranks with 'The Raven,' 'Tam O'Shanter,' 'Christabel' and 'The Ancient Mariner.' It is nature that you see in the grey plain and close-locked hills, but nature seen through the Devil's spectacles. Take such a picture as this —

> As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
> In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
> Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood —

or the crawling river

> So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
> Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
> Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
> Of mute despair, a suicidal throng;

and that awesome image at the close —

> The dying sunset kindled through a cleft;
> The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
> Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
> "Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!"

Yes, it's a marvellous poem, and shows a master's touch. When you analyse it, however, there's nothing that could not be said of our New England scenery. That weird, uncanny, supernatural effect is the magician's power that animates plain and hill, tree and brook and bat with the direful traits of human nature. You can read the fears and fateful memories of the Paladin in the sympathetic world about him. It's like studying the enlarged heads of photography. The rushing verse, the grey garb of nature and the language of fear suit the stirring subject. You may be surprised to hear me say that I admire the restraint of this poem. There is a great concentration of power in this succession of pictures, seen by flashes of poetic lightning. There's a difference between driving your imagination and letting it drive you. When Shakespeare and Browning fall they have used the spur too vigorously.

Browning, especially, has often ridden too furiously, and man and beast seem jaded. At times he seems to have as little control of his steed as John Gilpin in his memorable ride. But in 'Childe Roland,' the concentration, the restraint, the reserved power, makes the allegory one of the great tone pictures of literature. Suggestion and description are equally and happily employed.

How true that is, Clericus! I feel it myself. It does suggest the Fifth Symphony. It gives you that same sense of struggle, physical defeat and spiritual triumph. What was that text you quoted? "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." A great verse that, worthy such an illustration! Browning is a stimulating writer, he makes you think. And this poem of weird imagery and unconquerable spirit will long be an inspiration, "a golden apple in a silver picture." Imagery is a great gift; "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," he seems to say to his readers.

Imaginative power is the highest test of the poet, Clericus. It means the creative gift. Not all the artists, not all the treasures of the kingdom, could complete the unfinished window of the palace that the slaves of the lamp reared in a single night. The master is known by his works.

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

That is the secret of the strength of all the great writers — this power of seeing by the mind's eye all the details of Comedy or Tragedy luminous in the solitude of their own thought. It was this vivid imagination that drove Dickens through the wind and rain of Parisian streets haunted by the pathetic figure of Little Nell; that made Sardou shake with sobs and hysterical laughter as he read his plays to the Comédie Française; that peopled the

rocks of Guernsey with the discontented, seething life of Paris as Victor Hugo wrote 'Les Misérables.' It is this overpowering vision of what really exists in man's spiritual life that can alone explain the great pictures of Isaiah, Dante, Shakespeare, Browning. For your poet had it; his demon ruled him, and when the mood was on he threw off the robes of reserve and prophesied with inspired tongue. It is a great thing to give life to Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Juliet. It is a great thing to give life to Blougram, Caliban, Guido, Pompilia. "Such tricks hath strong imagination!"

What is imagination? I must fall back upon Shakespeare. It "bodies forth the forms of things unknown." It is the creative power of Michael Angelo, of Beethoven, of Shakespeare. You remember Mrs. Shelley's definition — that originality created out of chaos, not out of the void. Out of all the possible experiences of life the poet selects, combines and gives form to what was before vague and formless. His spirit broods over chaos and a world is born. By the way, I came across the statement lately that in this century there had been only four great imaginative writers, Michélet, whose special power was emotional, Hugo, whose gift was dramatic, Carlyle with his prophetic outlook and Walt Whitman with his cosmic consciousness. There is a classification of imagination that may help. I should say that Browning had the last pre-eminently; for certainly no one, not even King William himself, has struggled so often and so well with the great problems of the world — God, Duty, Evil, Beauty, Freedom, Immortality, Christ — as this poet of our century. His power is cosmic and emotional. His characters live and move and have their being, and in their successes and failures we see the great laws of the spiritual universe.

Are you satisfied, my dear fellow? Am I just? Far be it from me to underestimate a poet who has done so much for me! I admire him for the affluence of his nature that

loves the sinner as well as the saint, for those splendid affirmations of faith, for his rare imagination. But as I have tried to point out, in his dramatic poems he makes his impression not by the free use of brilliant imagery, indeed there is very little of it; but by the dramatic situation, the wealth of detail, and the spirited monologue.

I see you won't admit I 'm right. Well, argument never convinces. Besides, the coals are dying and my pipe is again empty. Another time. Good-night.

DRAMATIC MOTIVE IN BROWNING'S 'STRAFFORD.'

By CHARLOTTE PORTER.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, April 25, 1893.]

Is there a more potential moment in the life of England than that which poises, in even scales, the struggle between the king's prerogative and the people's will? Is there another man than Strafford who so perfectly incarnates the fated issue of that portentous clash of the old with the new? It is this moment that Browning selects for the opening of his first stage-play; it is this man he makes its protagonist.

The subject he chose has been called difficult. Its great difficulty consists, I think, in the peculiarly modern quality of its motive, and in the fact that an original path for it had to be struck out. Fate steers the action of the Greek tragedies through the personal adventures of the heroes of famous houses. Revenge, reconciliation, pride, ambition, passion, dominate the later European drama, or that punctilio of "honour" which Spanish playwrights introduced and which has been cunningly appropriated by France no less in the romantic drama of Victor Hugo than in the classic drama of Corneille. What road in common have such plays of family or personal interest with the play whose attempt must be to show personal interests and abilities in the vague grasp of an impersonal and unrecognised — until then an almost unexistent — power?

"The main interest of Strafford's career," says the able historian of this period, Mr. Gardiner, "is political, and to write a political play '*non dî, non homines, non concessere columnæ*.' The interest of politics is mainly indirect. Strafford is impeached not merely because he is hated, or because he has done evil things, but because he is expected to do more evil things. Such possibilities of future evil which the historian is bound to consider, are, however, essentially undramatic."

'Strafford' rests under this adverse cloud of pre-conceived opinion as to the capabilities of art. Yet, in the light which Browning's genius has shed upon these "possibilities of future evil," I believe a new fact in the development of dramatic craft may be descried which promises to show that they are not necessarily undramatic.

The Nemesis that brooded over and foreshadowed the outcome of the Greek tragedies shapes forth a dramatic effect most moving and intense. The Northern Nemesis — the Nemesis of Conscience that Shakespeare adapted to his service tended to like resistless and predestinate effect. Both find a sister of their own gigantic disembodied kind where, but in the obscure shape met at the very threshold of 'Strafford,' whose undescried presence fills the structure and the onset of the piece with omens of her energy, and closes the tragedy, at last, in pity and in terror, but in exultation, too, with the clear perception of her power? Her name is "England's fate," her champion is Pym, her half-unwitting enemy is Strafford, her manifestation is the growing potency of the people exerted against the councillor and the king who oppose her future possibilities of good. Her shape is new, her relationship with her well-known lordly sisters of Hellenic and Shakespearian drama is not yet all traced out; but are not the marks of her dramatic kinship sure?

The antique fate that animates events in Æschylus, that breathes submission in Sophocles, that, in Euripides, knows

how to reconcile itself with revolt and change, for "the gods bring to pass many divine things in an unexpected manner; both what has been expected has been accomplished, and God has found out a means for doing things unthought for," — is in Shakespeare modernised to work, subjectively, within the actions and history of the individual character. Thus in the course of the dramatic evolution fate becomes moral choice. In this play of Browning's it is modernised still more. It becomes human will: the will for the Ideal. But it is remarkable that in the guise it wears in such a play as 'Strafford' it tends both to old and new dramatic effects. For it is expressed no less in the actions and history of the individual character than in the larger processes of a great social movement. Such movements, to a poet like Browning, are after all not impersonal but personal. They are the complex issue of many human wills. Personality, then, really holds sway over the "possibilities of the future" as it does over the private course of every single action in the struggle. The poet's use, therefore, in this play, of these "possibilities of the future" is not abstract and historical, but living and dramatic.

Browning uses ideas to differentiate them. He is never a direct borrower, yet one can sometimes detect or suspect the influence upon him of two great English poets, — Shakespeare and Shelley.

It is of interest to remember that Shelley had once chosen Charles I. as the subject of a drama he never completed, and Browning's early devotion to the ardent young poet leaves one room to suppose that he did not pass that fragment by unnoticed. But the centre of action in Shelley's unfinished draft is the opposite of that Browning chooses. King Charles himself as lover — Henrietta Maria's luckless influence over him, that is — is to be the dramatic motive, so far as one may judge from the fragment left us. The tragedy is to be pivoted within the

court circle, not motived conspicuously outside it in the hidden power of the people. In fine, the poet of spiritual revolt seems to be preparing to treat this moment, big with the destiny of democracy, in a manner that belongs to the elder way of writing, suited to feudal customs and those classic fashions Aristotle prescribes when he shows how the subjects of tragedy should not be ignoble or unknown, but selected from the familiar legends of mighty houses.

Strong as Shelley's sympathies were with the new order — and were planned to be shown, no doubt, in the whole of this interrupted piece — his art was not yet free to wing its flight as its dreams willed. It is necessarily a later day of the world when Browning chooses the master-force of his play from a mighty house, indeed, O, Aristotle! although its legends and adventures are even yet more unfamiliar than those of royalty, — from the rising house of the people. In shaping his art in consonance with his motive-force the poet makes his craft as fresh and new a source of interest as the issue of the events he tells.

Shakespeare, in the only play dealing with a political interest at all comparable to that which holds sway in 'Strafford,' has alone indicated the way whose general direction Browning has followed independently and often divergently, as his need was.

'Julius Cæsar' opens on a scene with the Roman Rabble, as 'Strafford' does on a scene with the English Faction. The rabble is ignorant and unstable, the faction is intelligent and capable of self-control; yet the rabble is designated in Shakespeare, no less than the faction in Browning, as the background of power, — the Court of Appeal, in whose hands the future rests uncertain. Before the people the decision is placed, later, in both plays: in 'Cæsar' after the death of Julius; in 'Strafford' at the time of the earl's trial. Each play makes its close refer to a political future which has hung from the first upon the

tragic fate of the man against whom the action proceeds. The sympathies implied are not the same. The comparison, in many respects, results in contrast. What is similar, to some degree, is the general dramatic structure; what is dissimilar is the material, and the moral issue of the story. Both Brutus and Pym are friends of the men they resolve to sacrifice for love of country. Brutus is the hero of 'Julius Cæsar,' much as Pym is the hero of 'Strafford'; but Brutus, presently, divides this honour with Antony, as champion and representative of the dead Cæsar, and the whole play takes a turn whose direction is grounded on the fickle purpose of the people. The ghost of Cæsar then grows powerful. That royal spirit holds the lordship of the future, and therefore is impressive. With the imperial ghost is the final victory, and the principle is maintained against which Brutus fought. The result of the whole is not to ennoble Cæsar's personality, but to assert Cæsar's principle.

In 'Strafford' Browning works similarly just far enough to make the difference more striking. Pym's leadership continues unshaken because it is grounded on the steadfast purpose of the Parliamentarians, instead of on the fickle nature of the Rabble as Brutus's is; not even Strafford's great ability, therefore, and the pity his misfortunes and his nobleness justly excite, can swerve Pym's stroke aside. The weak and inefficient *rôle* of the people, in 'Cæsar,' is, in 'Strafford,' the weak and inefficient *rôle* of the king; and Charles's champion, Strafford, is made personally interesting and luckless throughout, as the noble exponent of a mistaken policy, just as Brutus, champion of the people, is in 'Cæsar.' Pym stands for much the same sort of sacrifice as Brutus, — he makes the same choice between the good of his country and the ill-fate of his friend; but, as the play goes on, and in the consummation of his sacrifices of his friendship and his friend for England's sake, Pym grows less strong per-

sonally, and more and more identified with the principle he asserts.

Cæsar and Cæsar's principle conquer in 'Julius Cæsar.' Pym and Pym's principle conquer in 'Strafford.'

Shakespeare, one may suppose, felt the mockery of Brutus's struggle since he showed him thus as one who —

> From desperate fighting, with a little band,
> Against the powerful tyrant of the land,
> To free his brethren in their own despite,
> Awoke from day-dreams to this real night.

Browning, on the contrary, one may suppose, feels nothing of the futile or unwise in Pym's battle to free his brethren, since he shows them as impelling and sustaining his course, and paints him as one whose ideal was not a vain one while unflinchingly he obeyed its lofty beckoning, although his heart was rent and emptied and made marble.

It is not alone historic truth that makes these two plays end as they do, — Shakespeare's with Cæsar's impersonal triumph, Browning's with Pym's equally impersonal triumph. With events as they are, in each case, they might have been construed differently. Shakespeare shows his dramatic design in turning his weak and peevish Cæsar into an almost contradictory mighty Cæsar who speaks through Antony's golden mouth and ranges as an angry ghost in the remorseful ill-foreboding heart of Brutus, to the end that Cæsar's political principle shall survive and lay its impress on the future; Browning shows his design dramatically, no less, I think, in making Pym embody England's will and crush himself as well as Strafford under the footsteps of her mightier fate.

An able writer on Shakespeare's dramatic art, Mr. Denton Snider, considers that Shakespeare's sympathies were decidedly conservative; and he adds, moreover, that they had to be so "to make him a great dramatic poet." Certainly Shakespeare did not have the same open sympathies with the promise of popular power that Browning's

construal of the events of 'Strafford' exhibits; but one scarcely can forget that no one had, — that the whole range of ideas which Browning loves to dwell upon were yet to be evolved; and the facts remain that Shakespeare chose so unique a subject as 'Julius Cæsar' presents for a drama; that he did not make a hero of Julius Cæsar, but rather made heroic the principle he represented; and, furthermore, that the principle is one — as the philosophic historian, Mommsen, has demonstrated — which was really more closely identified with the welfare and freedom of the people of the Roman Empire at large than the rule of the urban aristocracy whom Brutus represented. Shakespeare did, then, express the most liberal tendencies, the most enlightened view possible in his day. That his mode of procedure has somewhat of importance in common with Browning's I have pointed out in order to demonstrate how far the shining glance of the poet outruns the careful pace of historical and critical wisdom. Study of the development of literary ideals proves how unsafe it is to decide off-hand what genius cannot do.

In the first act of 'Strafford,' the *protasis* as the rhetoricians of the drama call it, the exposition of its motive-forces is unerringly given. Not a trait is too much or too meagre for the plan. The curtain rises on a "stealthy gathering of great-hearted men" in "an obscure small room" where broods the motive of all the future conflict, — the hidden evolving power of the people embodied in this gathering of patriots, and rising to a head in Pym, just as in Wentworth is summed up the opposed ability alone capable of "so heartening Charles," as Vane puts it, that "England shall crouch, or catch at us and rise."

The first note of the conflict Vane strikes sharply. What is it? It is fear of Wentworth's will and skill. "I say if he be here," Vane bursts out; "And he *is* here," grumbles Rudyard. The king at this moment, indeed, calls to his side the able President of the North to counsel

him in the larger concerns of his troubled kingdom. This news sets the future brewing. It is a scene almost of mutiny against the caution of Hollis, the forbearance of Hampden, and Pym's unwillingness to disbelieve in Wentworth. The disorder, and the apprehension of Wentworth's power against England, which master the hour, is suppressed only by the conviction that "One rash conclusion may decide our cause, and with it *England's fate*."

At these first words Browning cleaves to the heart of the action. The large outlines prefiguring England's fate are co-extensive, however, with subtler, more narrowly and warmly human interests.

Vane, who breaks the word to the audience of the wary watch England is keeping on Wentworth, tells, also, the story of Pym's and Wentworth's ancient friendship. His account of the meeting of these two men at Greenwich prefigures the tragedy, and identifies Pym with the oncoming opposition to Strafford. It points, too, to Pym's own heart as the field of a conflict between love and conscience, — between the yearning of a mighty friendship and his soul's best fealty to a lofty vision of England's future good.

This is one of the strokes of the poet which show how infinitely closer is his touch on life than the colder groping of the historian. Mr. Gardiner feels bound to warn us that Pym never had such a friendship for Strafford as he is represented as having; and he tells us this because he cannot find it set forth weightily in the records as it is in the play. The personal motive is always rightly the poet's affair of the imagination, not the historian's matter of fact. But, besides the story of the early intimacy and the anecdote of the Greenwich meeting told by Dr. Welwood in his Memoirs, and from which Browning, or Browning and Foster, took it, there are passages in Strafford's last speeches which imply the reality of the old friendship, in a way that need not cause one to scruple about yielding

the poet this cherished rich red thread of human feeling to weave in with the larger pattern of his wide web. Mr. Gardiner, indeed, though he gives it no certificate, does not grudge it to him; he wisely adds that, rather than point it out as erroneous, we will do better to ask the end it serves, and what higher truth of character results.

If this conflict within Pym's heart is not true it ought to be; if we have not a historian's warrant for it we have what 's better, — a poet's need of it to signify a higher guarantee of its probable truth than annalists are able to sign and seal us with their doubtful facts. And is it not true, then, true to the life, that in large actions which the world remembers long the pulse of personal love once beat devotedly? In the thick of the ferment what attractions and repulsions, what impervious hearts, what loyal souls! Word of not half this spiritual energy reaches the ready misquoting ear of rumour, yet the most unknown of such potencies plays its part and is registered silently in the result.

This inner human truth underlies the events Browning dramatises. Pym's true-hearted yearning over Wentworth; Lady Carlisle's admiring self-ignoring devotion to the earl; the earl's fascinated loyalty to the king; the king's slavery to the slightest displeasure of his wilful queen, — these close-linked springs of inward action are revealed one after the other in the first act of the play, and warn us of the presence of forces of the heart whose interplay is to humanise and enrich the huge march onward of the master-motive, — England's future.

The second act presents the *epitasis*, or tightening, of the plot. Precedence is yielded here, as in the first act, to the larger social motive, the first scene depicting the exasperation of the leaders against Strafford's skilful ministry on the king's behalf, and preparing the way for their meeting, face to face, with the earl in the second scene. From the violence of his reproaches of the faithless king,

the interruption of Pym and his companions recalls Strafford's loyal service to the king for ever, and the same instant fixes Pym's eye upon him, henceforth, as foe not friend to England. No hesitation is henceforth possible; and now, in the third act, comes the clash.

Strafford goes to his fate flushed with the certainty of triumph. "Pym shall not ward the blow" he plans, "nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew and the Cabal — I crush them." What quite other thing occurs the audience learns from a scene whose arrangement fits in strikingly with Browning's dramatic scheme. The proceedings are witnessed not from inside the House, but outside, with the waiting mob in the ante-chamber, as if the populace — always represented in 'Strafford' as the main power, whose bidding Pym and Hampden but interpret — were the supreme factor of the event. The stormy sea of the two parties is shown in ceaseless commotion. Puritan and Cavalier ride to victory with exultation, and each tastes the triumph but one side may enjoy, when, at last, with the rage of the righteous comes the text of the Puritans, — one of the most effective of the scriptural outbursts used to such picturesque purpose throughout the play: —

> The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
> The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
> The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
> That ruled the nations in his anger — he
> Is persecuted and none hindereth!

and Strafford issues, with the scorn of men behind him, impeached and insulted.

Most plays drag a little after such a climax is reached, but the usual downward movement of fourth acts is in this fourth act rather onward than downward. The action halts splendidly in the trial scene, only to gather head again for the next steps of attainder on the side of attack, of respite or rescue on the side of the defence.

I have heard the trial-scene censured for what seems to

me, in view of Browning's main motive, a token of its great originality and most appropriate art. The censure was that this scene should have been laid in the court itself, and that the chance should not have been lost of giving Pym's speech and Strafford's defence. It would have been a more panoramic spectacle; it would have been more oratorical; it would have given greater prominence to the single figures of the strife, ignoring what would ordinarily be considered the unimportant supernumerary bystanders. The effect would have been more in accord with dramatic precedent. But Browning chose rather, I believe, to give the broken talk about the trial as it fell from the lips of the people whom it so deeply concerned, and who so substantially sustained it both in its inception and its issue. He framed his craft in this scene in order to bring it in close harmony with his larger motive. It suits new conditions of social life and an original purpose in art.

The last act gathers to a focus all the sunny threads of human interest that irradiate the play. Lady Carlisle's affection plans Strafford's escape from the Tower, while he sits in prison with his children about him, for a breathing-space, at peace, in an island of childish song and prattle, till Hollis brings him word that the king has failed him utterly and the scaffold waits. Strafford's last act of loyalty is then consummated, — to yield assent to his own death and forgiveness to the king. He did this by letter in the records; in the play it is shown more forcibly. A masked attendant enters with Hollis. It is the king. Every word of Strafford stings him, most of all his loyal-hearted excuses for him. Lady Carlisle's love is stanch enough to dare to save Strafford, and her plan of rescue is ready to be carried out; but Pym's love stays fast and last. His prophecy holds good.

> *Strafford.* Not this way!
> This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.
Straf. The same:
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable. . . .
Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!
Lady Car. To save the King, — Strafford, to save the King!
[*As* STRAFFORD *opens the door,* PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back;* PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*]
Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart, — for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here —
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him.
. . . . . .
I render up my charge (be witness God!)
To England who imposed it. . . .
I never loved but one man — David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again.
. . . . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood? — enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!

But the end is not yet rounded out. Strafford's personal devotion to the king, in which Browning embodies the great feudal virtue, — loyalty to the liege, — fights yet to the last gasp against the new political virtue, — belief in the people, — and most against the horror of the last obstacle Pym shall remove from the path of England's future.

Oh, my fate is nothing —
Nothing! But not that awful head — not that!

pleads Strafford. Pym replies — "If England shall declare such will to me" —

"Pym, you help England!" falters Strafford, vanquished; yet only for an instant. He breaks out again consistently into a last agony of prayer for Charles: —

> No, not for England now, not for Heaven now, —
> See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!
> There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!
> This is the meeting: let me love you well!
> *Pym.* England, — I am thine own! Dost thou exact
> That service? I obey thee to the end.
> *Straf.* O God, I shall die first — I shall die first!

"Possibilities of future evil," against which Pym guards England, thus destroy Strafford and with grim certainty shadow forth his royal master's doom. Stubborn political impersonalities are made plastic by the poet's incarnation of them in loving souls.

Is it, indeed, impossible for the dramatist to depict liberal tendencies? No. He puts them not into words but into struggling hearts, conflicting wills, and lo! the drama is wrought.

BROWNING AS A DRAMATIC POET.

By HENRY JONES.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Oct. 24, 1893.]

THERE is perhaps no lesson which the literary critic should lay to heart more constantly than that of estimating different poets in different ways and according to different standards. Every great poet is, in the main, his own criterion, and is to be truly seen only in his own light. Philosophers fall into schools, and scientific men into groups and classes. Not that they lack individuality, — no effective thinker can lack this, — but that the qualities they have in common are more on the surface than their distinctive differences. But the poets resist all grouping and classification, unless they are small and imitative. Each great poet stands by himself like a Greek god, isolated from all others by his own peculiar perfection. No doubt he is the child of his time and his people just as much as the scientific man, and he is possible only through antecedents and environment like all others. But such is the freedom and the power of the spirit which breathes in him that he always comes as a sudden surprise, rising *ex abrupto* from the common level of the life of his age, like a mountain from the plain. He is always unique. Nature, having produced him (as an old author said of Shakespeare), breaks the mould. Chaucer is like no other, nor is Spenser, or Milton, or Wordsworth, or Browning. They learn from one another, of course. Each of them "ransacks the ages and spoils the climes," and derives from his brother poet the inspiration he can get nowhere else.

Nevertheless, what they give is far more manifest and more important than what they get; for every great poet adds some new quality to our literature. He puts a new string to the lyre, and the ear of the true critic will always catch the new note in the great orchestra. Not one of them can be truly said to continue the work of his predecessor in the same way as scientific men or philosophers do. The light of science broadens gradually into noon; but the great poets come out like the stars, — sudden points of brightness in the dark sky. What the scientific man leaves unfinished his successor may carry nearer completion; but a fragment left by a dead poet remains a fragment to the end of time. The broken columns of science may be fitted into the growing structure of knowledge; but what the artist leaves incomplete can only be desecrated by another hand.

The universal element, the common feature, has little value in art; it becomes a thin abstraction, and misses the ripe red at the core. Individuality is everything; and individuality is the universal wedded to the particular, the unity breathing itself into every detail and making of the whole a harmony.

On this account, even the broader classifications of the poets are often misleading and nearly always unsatisfactory; for they necessitate the comparison of one poet with another. While comparison may be necessary and helpful to us as we approach the poet, it is an annoyance and a hindrance once we have reached him. Each poet, nay, each poem, must win us for its own sake. It is, for the time being, like the object we love, all the world for us; for "fine art is always free," its own beginning and end, and motive and purpose, and its own law. Speaking generally, we may say that a writer is a dramatic, a lyric, or an epic poet; but if we leave apart the great types, even this broad classification is apt to be as misleading as it is inadequate.

I find this to be the case with Browning in particular. In contrast with Wordsworth, who is at once the most personal and the most impersonal of all our poets, occupied with his own moods and with the evolution of his own spirit, and yet at times so identifying himself with Nature as to speak in her great impersonal way, Browning is essentially dramatic, as he always considered himself to be; for he had a deep repugnance to self-revelation, deep as his antagonism to Byron "of the bleeding heart."

> Which of you did I enable
> Once to slip inside my breast,
> There to catalogue and label
> What I like least, what love best,
> Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
> Seek and shun, respect — deride?
> Who has right to make a rout of
> Rarities he found inside?
> *At the Mermaid.*

> Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?
> Do I live in a house you would like to see?
> Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
> "Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?"
>
> Friends, the goodman of the house at least
> Kept house to himself till an earthquake came.
> *House.*

But, when he is contrasted with Shakespeare, the difference in spirit and execution is so great that he almost ceases to appear dramatic. Of no one of Shakespeare's personages can we say, "There is the author himself;" of scarcely one of Browning's can we say, "There the author is not found." Browning has brought upon the stage in his dramatic pieces a most multitudinous and motley throng; there is no stratum of society or civilisation, and hardly a corner of the world of man, which has not its representative in his pages. Nevertheless, amidst all the diversities of type and race and character, there are certain constant qualities which are due to the poet himself. Browning

goes with his readers through the sights and wonders of the world of man. We never escape the sense of the presence of his powerful personality, or of the ardour and earnestness of the convictions on which he has based his life. Browning, I have ventured to say elsewhere, has at bottom only one way of looking at the world, and one way of treating his objects; one point of view and one artistic method.

This naturally follows from the fact that Browning found one theme whose interest was supreme, and that the subject which was all in all to him was not purely artistic, but also ethical. I cannot attempt here to discuss the relations of these two spheres; but it should never be forgotten that though art at its best is always moral, and the beautiful is both true and good, still morality is not art. Browning showed that he knew himself and his true work when he said that "he laid the stress on the incidents in the development of a soul," and he revealed his own artistic limitations when he added, "little else is worth study." The depth of his interest in the evolution of character, in the struggle by which the "soul awakes and grows" and holds by God, enabled him, as has been frequently observed, to complement the nature-poets. And the light with which he has flooded the moral world is beyond doubt the new quality he has added to our poetic possessions, his great and unique gift to mankind crowning him in turn with a glory all his own.

It was his interest in the evolution of character which drove him to the drama. There can be no doubt that the arts possess no instrument comparable in power of revealing character to the drama and its prose counterpart, namely, the novel. For the primary truth about character — a truth which professed writers on morals have never forgotten except with calamitous results — is that it is a living process, an endlessly varying movement, a continuous new creation. The unity of character is never broken, but

it is never fixed. Nothing can be said to be, but all is becoming. There is nowhere a static element; amidst all the doing there is nothing done. Even the freedom from which it derives its being is something never acquired, but is always being achieved. The day when we shall be free is ever in the future, though every action is due to the presence of freedom as an active conviction and living principle. Character thus presents itself at each moment as made up of latent potencies capable of being awakened by the clash with outward circumstances, and of taking ever a new form in the conflicts by which it maintains itself. It is a veritable treasury of surprises. They are surprises even to the dramatist himself. He cannot tell beforehand, as Scott admits, how his personages will behave. Their fate often seems to hang by a thread, and the pettiest incident may serve to set free hidden forces in a character which otherwise might have lain dormant. The greater the dramatist, the better he knows this, giving outward circumstances their place without making his personages puppets. The true dramatist is thus an observer and recorder, and nothing more. He neither approves nor disapproves, but without either prejudice or partiality lets the characters evolve their own destiny in the outer world. This is the root of the magnificent objectivity of Shakespeare. This is why we cannot find him in any of his works. He has no preconceived theory, no dominant scheme of life, no likes or dislikes; but his bosom is broad as Nature's, and he sheds his genial sunshine on all alike. In a word, he gives them life and a world to work in, and then he stands aside while they pass judgment upon themselves.

Now, this movement, this evolution of latent tendencies through stress and conflict, which characterises life and the dramatic representation of it, is a permanent quality of Browning's writing. Even in such poems as 'The Ring and the Book,' where the poet knows the end from the

beginning, and where the story expands at each telling like circles in water, this dramatic quality is present; for he throws the action into the shifting present. We know the whole story, in a sense, after the first telling; but its meanings rise up one after the other as we read the speech of Caponsacchi and the musings of Pompilia and of the Pope. We never have the feeling that we are reading the record of events that are past, as we have in the writings of an essentially epic poet like Milton. If we do not catch the action in its making, as we do in Shakespeare, we hear it reverberate in the world of thought: its echoes are not dead. In this respect, Browning writes dramatically; whether there is movement in his outer world of action or not, there is movement in his world of thought.

But, in constant conflict with this dramatic element in Browning's poetry, there is another which mars its effect and limits the range of its power. I mean the supremacy of Browning's interest in morals. I cannot deny, and I do not wish to deny, that the conflict of right and wrong within a life is the supreme fact both for men and for the dramatic representation of them. Nevertheless, none can read Shakespeare or Scott and say with Browning that "little else is worth study." On the contrary, we know full well that Dogberry and Falstaff, and Imogen and Rosalind, and many more are interesting quite apart from all ethical considerations. In his tragedies, no doubt, Shakespeare raises the deepest ethical questions; there is the clash of the powers and principalities of the moral world, and these always constitute the greatest and most majestic dramatic element, compelling pity and terror. Indeed, I am not sure that a non-ethical tragedy is possible, or that anything can rouse the deepest pity except the defeat of a form of good. But to ask moral questions when we read Shakespeare's comedies, to regard Falstaff or Touchstone as either moral or immoral, is to place ourselves at a point of view hopelessly irrelevant. And yet

they are worth study! And might we not venture to learn from them that there are other things in the world besides right and wrong? In any case, a humourist and a poet might have a good deal to say for himself if he insisted that there are some men and women who are best appreciated only if we regard them as non-moral, as neither good nor bad, as meant not so much to illustrate the conflict of right and wrong as the comedy of situation. Life, no doubt, is serious enough for them, but may not a poet be allowed to forget this? Or, to put the question in another form, can we be quite sure that humour has no place amongst the divine attributes?

Browning, if we may judge from his dramas, took the negative answer for granted. Nothing has interest for him except right and wrong. This, no doubt, is his strength and the crown of his glory amongst the poets; it is also his weakness. He cannot forget the mighty issues which hang on paltry facts and passing thoughts; and life is to him "all astrain." He has a surpassingly quick eye for moral effects, for the consequences that reverberate endlessly in the world of spirit, darkening destiny into tragedy and making even the movement of the Good awful in its magnitude; but he is generally blind to the lighter play of things, — to the fanciful idea that brings nothing but laughter in its train, to the emotion that only ripples the surface, to the inconsequence and incoherence, the oddities and inversions, in which Comedy, forgetting the stern rule of law, always revels. Ethics is, it is true, the completest science of man; but there is room for other sciences of man as well. For man is not always moral or immoral, at least not consciously so. He is the offspring of Nature as well as the child of light, and much of his life is only indirectly related to good and evil. The constant consciousness of infinite moral issues veritably latent even in little things would crush him. I am not sure that it would make him a good man; or whether rather it would

not be better for him to do some good things as the bird sings on the tree-top, — with "a fine, careless rapture."

I do not mean that Browning's dramas are too moral or that he is too great a teacher of good. That, I believe, is not possible. What I mean is that his moral interests are too obtrusive, and that he is too conscious of a mission; and a mission destroys the drama. No sterner moral lesson is taught in all literature than Hamlet teaches to his mother in the closet scene. But the scene comes by the way. There is no mechanical preparation for it, and no reminiscence of it after it is over. The poet never purposed it. It is unpremeditated, spontaneous, the product of the moment, and therefore irresistibly impressive. Again and again in Shakespeare we find some little incident or stray word sets free some great conception.

Portia. Do you confess the bond?
Antonio. I do.
Portia. Then must the Jew be merciful.
Shylock. On what compulsion must I? tell me that.

Then follows "The quality of mercy is not strained" and the whole immortal passage. I cannot recall at present any great passage in Browning which rises on the reader just in this way, any such great conflagration kindled by an accidental spark. The scenes which involve direct moral issues generally come of set purpose. He prepares for them, carries them with him throughout the play, and makes them the pivot on which the whole action turns.

In fact, this brings into view a notable and, I believe, a unique feature of Browning's dramas. They are never placed, like Shakespeare's, frankly in the outer world, but in the world of emotions and passions, and volitions and thoughts. His dramas are in his characters, and his characters are not in the world, but in some section cut out of it.

In consequence, it is the spiritual aspect of the actions

which is presented to the reader; the moral issues are given bare and naked, and not, as in Shakespeare, through the medium of the incidents of ordinary life. If the outer world does come in, it is only as a background on which the real action — namely, that of thought or passion — is cast. The stage is filled with moral agents in a state of spiritual tension, not with men and women who are flesh and blood as well as spirit, and who are in time and space as well as in the world of the eternal verities. It may be worth our while to exemplify this cardinal feature of Browning's dramas. His dramas do not as a rule lack incidents and events; hardly one of them is stagnant like 'Hamlet,' where the tragedy hangs overhead, motionless as a black cloud. There is the hurry and the heat of tragic situations in the act of evolving themselves; and, so far, the representation is dramatic. Nevertheless, they are not frankly in the outer world, not genuinely objective. I find everywhere the poet's own mood and passion; moods and passions which have their root in some moral conviction, and which envelop the agents, subtly removing them from the ordinary life and giving to them and their actors an air of unreality and untruth. We recognise at once that the love scenes in 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' are written by a moralist, and by a surpassingly great one. We feel the tragic tension, the moral strain, in Mildred's first words to her lover: "Sit, Henry — do not take my hand!" It deepens with the next question: "What begins now?" and then comes the overmastering consciousness that she does not deserve the happiness which is on the threshold, and that she will never have it.

> Ah God! some prodigy of thine will stop
> This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
> In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
> Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
> Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
> But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
> The love, the shame and the despair.

Mildred is everywhere and always in the same highly strung mood. There is nothing for her in the whole world except a great love and a broken moral law; she never comes down into the level plain of ordinary life — unless we except those words of unutterable pathos which she repeats as if they were the burden of a sad song ever murmuring in her broken heart: —

> I was so young, I loved him so, I had
> No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.

These simple words more than aught else bring her near to us, a maiden amongst maidens, only stricken with grief.

The same deep pathos brings the Queen of 'In a Balcony' very near to us at times.

It is petty criticism, I think, to urge that Mildred was only "fourteen" when the play opens, and that such an insight into the issues of right and wrong is not possible to a child, although, of course, it is true. What a critic has a complete right to object to is that Mildred is presented to us in no other mood than this of sublime moral tension; and that, so far as she is concerned, the whole action takes place not in the ordinary world, but on "Mount Sinai altogether on a smoke" amidst the terrors of a broken law. I would repeat my belief that practically our only task here on earth is "to learn thro' evil that good is best," and that the drama at its height turns on moral issues. But, on the other hand, that lesson has to be learned in a natural environment, where the sun shines and the flowers grow, and men and women eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage. That natural environment is not to be found in this play. Shakespeare would have made it break in, so intimate is his touch on reality. When the moods and passions have swept his characters beyond the confines of ordinary life, the common world comes knocking at the door, and we have such scenes as that of the porter in 'Macbeth,' which deepens the tragedy and makes it real by letting in

the contrast of the common light of day in its ordinary course. But Mildred lives throughout the play in another world from ours; or if it is our world, if our world is spiritual at the core and morality its essence, its natural veil is torn off by the poet. Her thoughts, her true self, had already passed beyond the walls of the prison-house. Her

> spirit yearned to purge
> Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire.

And in consequence her death does not touch us like the death of Cordelia or Desdemona. She is not removed from our very midst, and we are not left desolate; for she was always far away, in a world not ours.

We find the same absence of an every-day environment, the same intrusion of the poet's own conception, and consequently the same touch of unreality, in the character of Tresham. A single trait once more wipes out all else. In his case, it is the consciousness of an ancient descent, together with the dignity and reserve and pride and statuesque nobility of a scion of an old house. The 'scutcheon without stain is a fixed idea, an obtruding and all-obliterating element. His first words are of the "ancestral roof," and all but his last dwell on the same theme.

> You 're lord and lady now — you 're Treshams; name
> And fame are yours; you hold our 'scutcheon up.
> Austin, no blot on it!

Gwendolen, the only entirely natural character in the play, the representative of common sense and practical usefulness, carrying with it as usual a tinge of humour as sweetening salt, knows well his weakness and plays with it.

> He 's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
> The light of his interminable line,
> An ancestry with men all paladins,
> And women all —

It might be pleaded in justification of Browning that the play turns upon the blot in the 'scutcheon, and that it

must not be blamed for being what it professes to be. It might also be urged that every tragedy must turn upon the excessive development of some partial good, and its consequent collision with a good that is greater and wider. The drama, in other words, teaches us that

> God fulfils himself in many ways
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,

and that there is nothing good except the whole. In this respect every tragedy must have its own special purpose; and although it is foolish criticism to regard Shakespeare's plays as written to illustrate a moral, they are, all the same, dominated each by a single conception, which pervades all their details as life animates every particle of the organism. The error of the critics is to forget that the unity, just because it is living, is too subtle for definition. It escapes the distinctions of discursive thought, and it reports itself only to the feeling of the artistic spirit. The impression is one and single, but we know not why; and we know not why, not because there are no reasons, but because there are too many; for, just as life declares itself in all that we do, so every movement is the manifestation of its unity. The defect in Browning's dramas is therefore not that they have unity of purpose, but that this unity is separable from the rest, capable of being defined; it obtrudes itself; it is aggressive rather than pervasive. His dramas are like fugues in music; the main theme is caught up now by this voice, now by that: —

> One dissertates, he is candid;
> Two must discept, — has distinguished;
> Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
> Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
> Back to One, goes the case bandied.
> . . . . .
> So your fugue broadens and thickens,
> Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
> Till we exclaim — "But where 's music?"
>
> *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.*

Thus, while the idea which, no doubt, lies at the root of every one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, baffles the critics to express it, because every expression seems to leave something out, I think that in the case of every one of Browning's tragedies the main idea is accurately definable. The only one that might defeat our attempt is 'Strafford,' where, as historians tell us, Browning paints the actual events with marvellous insight and accuracy. Who can doubt that 'Luria' is based on the collision of the fresh life of the East with an effete civilisation, or of Nature with art grown to be artifice?

> My own East!
> How nearer God we were! He glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours:
> We feel him, nor by painful reason know!
>
> *Luria*, Act V.

In this play, as in several others, such as 'King Victor and King Charles,' 'Colombe's Birthday,' and 'In a Balcony,' there is also to be detected an impulse rarely dormant in the poet's breast, — the impulse to illustrate the victorious strength of the soul, bold in the consciousness of its right cause, marching straight on its object, abjuring prudence, which is the wisdom of man, for truth, which is the wisdom of God. Truth, and the courage which goes with it, was a passion in Browning, a great fire in his heart. Unlike the pure artist, he hated a lie more than ugliness; and in this lies the secret of his interest in craft and guile, in Guido and Blougram and Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau, and in Fifine's gentlemanly casuist. Faithful always to his task, he

> Untwists heaven's white from the yellow flare
> O' the world's gross torch.
>
> *The Pope.*

And fast by truth, within the truth as its inmost essence, there always comes love, the poet's other magnificent

prejudice. In 'Colombe's Birthday' and 'In a Balcony' both of these strands are woven together; nowhere in literature is their union so celebrated, nowhere is love more plainly set forth as the eternally true.

> There is no good of life but love — but love!
> What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
> Love gilds it, gives it worth.
> *In a Balcony.*

Love is no mood or passion, not a light that plays upon the world, but something which transfigures it and even *constitutes* it. "I *am* love," says Norbert, "and cannot change; love's self is at your feet!"

> Let me fulfil my fate —
> Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,
> Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
> Hold you and have you, and then die away,
> If God please, with completion in my soul!

Being truth, it is the source of every strength, the one purpose great enough to make itself felt as a mastering power in the world's bewildered course.

> Oh never work
> Like his was done for work's ignoble sake —
> Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!
> I felt, I saw, he loved — loved somebody.

> Let her but love you,
> All else you disregard! what else can be?
> You know how love is incompatible
> With falsehood — purifies, assimilates
> All other passions to itself.
> *Colombe's Birthday.*

Being truth, it is its own sufficient reward; it is all, and *must* satisfy the soul.

> Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
> And say, love can go unrequited here!
> You will have blessed him to his whole life's end —
> Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
> All goodness cherished where you dwelt — and dwell.
> What would he have?

It is difficult not to dwell on this great strain in Browning's poetry. Love has been much sung in the world's long course, though such love as this never before.

But its very intensity mars the dramatist; for he must paint the world as it seems, although its seeming may be false. His task is not to find the truth beneath the shows of sense, not to "untwist heaven's white from the yellow flare," not to separate the mean and low from the high and pure, but to represent man as the sorrowful yet sacred compound which he is. Browning cannot do this. I do not mean that his characters are mechanically simple, like those of George Eliot's later works; we cannot put their motives together like the pieces of a clock-work, which, though it may have many wheels and pins, some of them very small, is still held together by a simple, natural force. Browning's personages are men and women, and they live. But yet they are simple for another cause; for they are all ruled by some overmastering passion or some despotic idea, — caught in the whirl of some sweeping mood. If we said that Browning, like Ben Jonson, writes of humours, we should do him injustice and still convey some truth. The significant difference between them is that these humours are not, in Browning's characters, surface elements, external tricks of speech and action, petty idiosyncrasies; the significant similarity is that Browning gives to each some dominant mood that never for a moment relaxes its hold, but, like a consuming fire, assimilates everything to itself. It would be untrue to say that his personages are embodiments of *à priori* conceptions, or that they are made in order to illustrate an idea on a preconceived scheme. Yet it is quite evident that their characters are not the result of their intercourse with their fellows and of the interaction between them and the world. Had not Macbeth met the witches on the moor with the excitement of the battle not yet subsided, the ambition within him might have left him a loyal and victorious general. It is the

outer incident which lets loose the inner impulse, and ever and anon some new hint is caught from circumstances, which adds fuel to the fire. And what a chapter of accidents there is in 'Othello' or 'Hamlet'! The plays move and the doom always comes nearer, but by what devious ways and apparently meaningless windings! These dramas are like life, just because the fate which is irresistible conceals itself amidst accidents; it carries with it so much apparently irrelevant and so many seemingly inconsequent events, any one of which might be turned to account, but are allowed to slip beyond the grasp. But Browning's plays march straight onward. The chief characters, enveloped in their own moods as in a driving storm, turn not from their predestined course. Outward circumstances serve to reveal their qualities, but there is otherwise little response to them, and little development. They are freighted with their destiny from the first, — Mildred with her woe, Pym with his great love for England, Luria with the tropic wealth of his generous nature, Colombe with the simple maidenhood that will always set love above the pomp of state, and Valence with his stormy straightforwardness and his great heart. Browning's greater characters are so charged with their passion, whether it is of the intellect or of the heart, that the smaller things of life cannot affect them. In fact, Browning cannot deal in delicate lights and shades. He plays on no lute or lyre, but on an organ that always blows with full power.

> The pillar nods,
> Rocks roof, and trembles door, gigantic, post and jamb,
> As harp and voice rend air — the shattering dithyramb!
> *Fifine at the Fair.*

Wrapped in his theme, the poet forgets the world without. His theme develops in his hands, the thoughts implicit within it change and grow, but the character remains substantially the same from beginning to end. The poet is,

in fact, a slave to his own intensity and ardour. When he deals with the "development of a soul" he is in no holiday mood, and his touch is rarely light, except in the case of subsidiary personages. He is so intent on the inner meaning, his eye is so fixed on the greater elements in his characters, that he is blind to the small peculiarities of speech and gait and action, and to the side-play of casual incidents which is often so significant in Shakespeare's hands. The consequence is that we cannot distinguish his characters except by broad lineaments. We feel that we should recognise Imogen or Cordelia or Rosalind even though they never spoke; and if they do speak, a word reveals them. But the Queen of 'In a Balcony,' and Constance, and Mildred reason of their love in the same manner, although the first is old and worn, the second in the full summer of womanhood, and the third at its early spring. To recognise them, we must know their history and hear all they have to say. Browning's drama is not spectacular; he appeals to our reason rather than to our imagination; the play of fancy is very rare, and of humour still rarer. In fact, the critic who does not fear to raise a storm might hold that Browning has no humour. We need not say that Lance and Launcelot Gobbo, Dogberry and Touchstone, are absolutely beyond his reach; he has no Bob Acres even, or Sir Antony Absolute. Browning always needs a great theme and room to develop it. Some of his lyrics, no doubt, are as light as they are beautiful, and the 'Pied Piper' is by no means the only example he gives of first-rate, joyous story-telling. Nevertheless, speaking generally, Browning is not like Bottom, and can neither play all parts nor "aggravate his voice so as to roar us gently." Plagued by problems, crammed with knowledge, crowded with thoughts, he cannot master his material within narrow limits. His dramas in consequence move heavily as a rule, though I would fain make an exception of parts of 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.' There is

little play of wit, and no bright repartee, but the speeches are generally long and weighty with thought.

In a word, the dialectical power of Browning, the supremacy of his interest in morals, his force, mass, and momentum, his stormy strength, point to the monologue as his true vehicle for expressing himself. Browning is found at his best in 'The Ring and the Book,' and in 'Paracelsus,' or 'Fifine,' or 'The Inn Album.' The demands which the drama makes, poised as it is on the point of interaction between the outer and inner worlds, cannot be met by one whose soul ever dwells amidst the fundamental elements of life, delighting in the great principles constitutive of man and the world. The greatest works of Browning are neither narrative nor dramatic nor reflective; because they are all three. The ordinary distinctions fail in his case; he breaks through our limitations and definitions just because he is a great poet, adding a new quality to our literature.

> Ours the fault,
> Who still misteach, mislead, throw hook and line,
> Thinking to land leviathan forsooth,
> Tame the scaled neck, play with him as a bird,
> And bind him for our maidens! Better bear
> The King of Pride go wantoning awhile,
> Unplagued by cord in nose and thorn in jaw,
> Through deep to deep, followed by all that shine,
> Churning the blackness hoary!
>
> *The Pope.*

THE PROBLEM OF PARACELSUS.

By JOSIAH ROYCE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Nov. 26, 1893.]

THE collection of poems belonging to what may be called the "Faust-cycle," in the literature of the present century, contains no extended work whose machinery of plot and of incident is, when externally regarded, simpler than that of Browning's 'Paracelsus.' The relations of hero and tempter are nowhere freer from external complication than when the hero is explicitly the deceiver of his own soul. With Paracelsus this is actually the case.

For classing 'Paracelsus' with the Faust-cycle in this way there are many grounds. The real Paracelsus was a contemporary of the historic prototype of Faust. The two figures were, as a fact, closely linked in Goethe's mind, as they must have been in Browning's. Such a classification in no wise detracts from the sort of originality which the poem possesses, while it aids us in finding our way when we consider its problem. The absence of an external tempter in no wise excludes the poem from the Faust-cycle; for the tempter in most such creations is but the hero's other self, given a magical and plastic outer reality, as with Manfred. As regards the positive aspects of the analogy, the typical hero of a poem of the Faust-cycle is a man of the Renaissance, to whom the church is no authority, and to whom the world is magically full either of God's or of Satan's presence, or of both. This hero risks his soul in a quest for some absolute fulfilment, of pleasure,

power, wisdom or peace. Thus staking everything, he gets, like an early voyager to the New World, either the doom of the outlaw, or the glories of the *conquistador;* but meanwhile he comes near, if he does not meet, an evil end in the abyss.

Thus regarded, the problem of Paracelsus readily defines itself. We are to study the career of a spiritual relative of Faust. Accordingly, we have to consider his original quest, and the strong Satanic delusion to which he fell prey. In such a light we may hope to express the sense of his tragedy.

I.

Browning has told us several times, in the course of the poem, where to look for the heart of the mystery. Paracelsus made it his early ideal "to know." Failing in this undertaking, conceived as it was in a spirit of ideal youthful extravagance, the maturer Paracelsus learns from the poet Aprile, in the scene at the Greek conjurer's house, that the goal of life ought to be "to love" as well as "to know." He endeavours, in consequence, to reform his life according to the new insight; but the attempt comes too late. The "love" that the great alchemist tries to cultivate in his heart turns rather to hate. He flees from his office as professor at Basel, wanders, wastes years fruitlessly, and dies, seeing indeed at last his true defect, and explaining it in the wonderful closing speech of the poem.

The whole tragedy thus turns explicitly upon this poetic antithesis between "loving" and "knowing." But these words are among the most manifold in meaning of all the words of human language; from the nature of the case they have to be so. In this poem, then, just as in daily usage, they will mean whatever the whole context of the action shows. Browning portrays, as usual, a "mood" (the word is his own, used in the preface to the first edition of the poem). He leaves us to draw for ourselves the conclusion from the situation before us. His choice in this

regard but embodies the natural privilege of the dramatic poet; the critical problem that results for us is one of the most legitimate sort. A tragic conflict has occurred through the interplay of two of the most universal and Protean of human interests. How these interests are here coloured and defined, and why they thus conflict, we are, as readers, to determine. Such questions of interpretation are necessary in case of every serious dramatic issue.

The very simplicity of seeming of the two familiar words "love" and "knowledge" has, however, blinded many readers to the actual complications of the poem. Of the critics some, like Mr. Arthur Symons, find the tragic error of Paracelsus in the fact that he is "one whose ambition transcends all earthly limits, and exhausts itself in the thirst of the impossible." This is of course true in a measure of any hero of the type of Faust; but one thus defines, as it were, only the genus, not the species, of this particular flower from the fields of tragedy. Of the antithesis between "love" and "knowledge" itself, other critics, notably Mr. Berdoe, together with far too large a number of readers, appear to make little more than would be expressed by the comparatively shallow and abstract platitude that the intellect without the affections is a vain guide in life. I doubt not that Browning most potently believed this platitude. Who of us does not? But with such abstractions one gets but a little way, and creates no tragic issues. As a fact, nobody who has a nature on the human level, ever lives by either the intellect alone or the affections alone. Every rational being both "knows" and "loves," if by these words be meant only the bare abstractions called the "pure intellect" and the "affections." One might "love" Hebrew roots, or "know" the art of love-making. In either case, in actual life, one would combine the two functions of loving and knowing, whatever one did. But the problem of life is always what to know and what to love. Apart from specific objects,

the two tendencies have no true antithesis. If, then, Browning's contrast means anything, these two words must be used, as St. Paul used them, or as common sense always uses them, in a pregnant sense, and with an implied reference to particular objects known or loved.

Browning cannot mean to ascribe his hero's failure to the fact that he is a "pure intellectualist," in the sense in which that term is often applied to a man who is exclusively in love with the study of some one abstract science. Such a devotee of pure science Browning actually sketched for us later in the 'Grammarian's Funeral.' The poet, fond as he is of strenuousness, has no word of blame for the ideal of such a student, whose one-sidedness he finds not tragic, but glorifying.

> Let a man contend to the uttermost
> For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

That is Browning's creed, from first to last. I can conceive, then, no error more hopeless than to suppose that the pregnant words which name the ideals of "love" and "knowledge," here tragically and sharply opposed to each other, are merely names for the intellectual and the affectionate sides of human nature, or that the poem is merely a sentimental protest on the part of a young poet against the too exclusive devotion of a thoughtful hero to his life's chosen business. Were that the case, it would be the solitary instance in all Browning's works where a hero suffers in the poet's estimation because of a too sincere devotion to his chosen ideal.

As a fact, such an estimate of our poem would here contradict the most obvious facts of the text. The man Paracelsus, at his coldest, never even tries to appear in this poem as a partisan either of a pure intellectualism of any sort, or of what we nowadays should call the "scientific spirit." He is no abstract reasoner, but a man of intuitions; no admirer of the so-called "cold intellect," but a

passionate mystic; no steadily progressive student, busied with continuous systematic researches, but a restless wanderer; no being of clear-cut ideas, but a dreamer. The attentive reader cannot miss these altogether fundamental considerations. Unless we bear in mind these characteristics — the dreaminess, the ardour, the mysticism, the unsteadiness, and the essential unreasonableness of Browning's Paracelsus, — the man and his fortunes will remain a sealed book. No interpretation that forgets these facts in defining what "knowledge" meant for Paracelsus, and how it was opposed to the "love" of the poet Aprile, will be able even to approach a comprehension of the text, or to see wherein Paracelsus was deceived.

I may observe in passing that Browning was fond of using the words "love," "knowledge," and "power" in a pregnant sense. All three are so used not only in this poem but also down to the latest period of the poet's work. The use of familiar words in a pregnant sense, to be defined by the context, is the poet's substitute for technical terms. In 'Reverie,' in 'Asolando,' precisely the same antithesis as that upon which the tragedy of 'Paracelsus' is based is treated, not in its relation to a hero's character, but in a general and meditative fashion, with the use of the words "love" and "power" as the terms. In fact the problem of 'Paracelsus' involves one of Browning's most frequent and favourite topics of reflection.

II.

In the case of a tragedy of Browning's creation, one can do little with the ideas, unless one first understands the hero's personality. How ideal are the aspirations which Browning attributes to his hero, every reader knows. What many readers neglect is that other and far less ideal disposition which, with a characteristic respect for the complexities of human nature, he attributes to what one may call his hero's lower self. Browning has affixed to

the poem certain prose notes, meant to help us in understanding the author's attitude. Read by themselves, these tend to make us think of Paracelsus and his fortunes in anything but an ideal light. The excesses, the charlatanry, the other marks of degradation, — the roughness of speech of this rugged being, when once he is angered, his pettiness of motive when once he is involved in difficulties, — to all these the notes deliberately attract attention. All are fully reflected in the poem itself. Browning is not the slavish admirer of his own hero, but the true dramatic poet, who takes interest in the struggle of a great but burdened and in some respects degraded soul for the far-off light. Until the very end we must not expect to find Paracelsus wholly or even very largely an enlightened being. He has to work aspiringly in the dark.

As a creature of flesh and blood, Browning's Paracelsus is, first of all, rather a dreamer than a thinker. He is extremely intelligent, but essentially a creature of flashes of insight. He is of indomitable courage and of restless temper, impatient of restraint, and extremely fond, like many other professional men, of the sound of his own voice. He is very unconscious meanwhile of a certain curiously sentimental fondness for his intimate friends which lurks in the background of his rugged temperament, and which, especially in the third and fourth acts, gets very noteworthy expressions. Unable to bring this sentimental motive either to form or to consciousness, he is driven to search ceaselessly for exciting experiences, to the end that a heart which can never be satisfied may be kept constantly stimulated. So long as life is new, he indeed is able to refrain absolutely from all meaner indulgences; but he is somewhat coarse-fibred, and when higher excitements fail, he takes a certain rude delight in more ignoble sport, and meanwhile despises himself therefor. He is overwhelmingly proud, and is by nature condemned to a profound loneliness of experience.

In order to comprehend what sort of "knowledge" is in question in the poem, let us observe something suggested by the relation of our hero to the real Paracelsus. Browning says: "The liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary." Browning was twenty-two years old when he thus wrote. His previous reading had been varied and industrious. From first to last he was fond of what is called mystical literature. Mrs. Sutherland Orr mentions among the books read in the poet's boyhood an old treatise on astrology. For the poem itself he read during a few months very extensively. There is no evidence, however, that he considered it his task, as poet, to trouble himself much concerning the technical aspect of the opinions which distinguish the actual Paracelsus from other thinkers of a similar intellectual type. It is fairly plain, however, that Browning had interested himself to collect from such sources as he used a number of illustrations of the characteristic speeches and the personal attitudes of his hero. The special doctrines of the thinker had less concern for him. Their spirit, and the deeper nature of the man, he sought authentically to portray.

Especially authentic as characterising the real Paracelsus, and especially important, also, for understanding the poetic antithesis of "love" and "knowledge," as here developed, is an intellectual trait which Browning makes prominent in his hero throughout the poem, — the curious union of a very great confidence in private intuitions, in the inner light, as such, with a very great respect for what Paracelsus regards as the right sort of external experience of the facts of nature. Here is a man to whom "knowledge" means his own private, immediate, and intuitive apprehension of truth through the inner light, but to whom this inner light means nothing except in relation to the details of outer experience, as he himself has verified

them; a dark-lantern sort of spirit who has to shine alone apart from other lights, and whose spiritual insight for ever flashes its brilliant beams now on this, now on that chance fact of the passing moment. To understand the significance of this tendency we must give the matter still closer scrutiny.

III.

Browning well read in the real Paracelsus the just-mentioned fundamental and noteworthy feature of his mental processes. Some men believe in the intuitions, in the inner light, of either the reason or the heart; and therefore they find these intuitions so satisfying that they neglect or even abhor the baser revelations of the senses. Such men go into their closet and shut the door, or, as Schiller has it, they "flee from life's stress to the holy inner temples." Here they can be alone with God, with the truth, with their love, or with all their noble sentiments. Such men may be abstract thinkers, serene and deep, like Spinoza. If they are more emotionally disposed, they become, in various untechnical and devout fashions, contemplative mystics, quietists, seers of divine and incommunicably beautiful dreams. On the other hand there are men who stand in sharp contrast to the former; these believe, as they say, only "in the hard facts of experience." Accordingly, they mistrust all intuitions, whether rational or emotional. Men of this type we call pure empiricists or positivists.

But these two sharply contrasted types do not anywhere nearly exhaust the possibilities. Many men there are who join, in one way or another, intuition and experience. Of these latter there are not a few, — even among the patient students of natural science, still more, among the students of the moral world, — who look to see the divine law illustrated and incarnated in the facts of experience, vivifying either the whole, or some luminous part thereof, with its own grace and significance. In the classification of

these mixed types we must appeal to a very ancient and familiar distinction, — that between the world of our physical and the world of our moral experiences. Upon this distinction the problem of our whole poem turns.

Granted, then, that one may expect a divine order, such as the higher intuitions have seemed to reveal to the mystics, to be more or less obviously embodied and exemplified in some type of the concrete facts of our experience, there still remains the question, Is it Nature, or is it Spirit; is it the physical world, or the moral world; is it the outer order of natural events, or is it the conscious life of mankind in their social, their moral, their emotional relations; is it the world as the student of natural wonders, or the world as the lover of human life, the artist, the portrayer of passion, comprehends it; in fine, is it the world of the "powers" of nature, or the world of the heart of man, that is the most likely and adequate to furnish facts capable of illustrating and embodying the divine purpose? This question is one of the oldest in the history of the higher problems of human thought. The vision of Elijah at Horeb is an ancient comment on this topic. Is God in the wonders of nature — in the storm, the thunder, the earthquake? No, answers the story, He is not in these. He is in the "still small voice." The antithesis is thus an extremely familiar one; it was a favourite topic of consideration with Browning. His own personal view agrees with that of the narrator of the vision of Elijah.

Many men (for instance, the modern followers of the ethical idealism that resulted from Kant's teachings) have learned to be very sceptical about finding any revelation of the divine will, or of any absolute truth, in the world of the facts of physical nature. These facts they find, like Browning in 'Reverie,' too complex, too deep, too full of apparent evil, too dark, to show us the divine will. God may be behind them, but they hide his true life. Our insight into external nature is essentially limited. We

vainly strive, in the present life, to peer into such mysteries. The world of physical experience is, as Kant declared, but the world of our limitations. It is the moral world, then, and not the physical world, that can show the divine. In 'Reverie' Browning states the issue and its possible solution substantially thus: If one looks outwards, one sees a world which Browning calls the world of "power," that is, the physical universe. It is a world of rigid law, and in the observer it begets a state called knowledge, that is, in the language of this poem, an outward-looking and helplessly submissive acceptance of what one finds there: —

> "In a beginning God
> Made heaven and earth." Forth flashed
> Knowledge: from star to clod
> Men knew things: doubt abashed
> Closed its long period.

"Knowledge obtained, Power praise," continues the poet; but he observes that what knowledge has thus revealed is everything and anything but a manifestly divine order. This world of natural knowledge shows itself full of strife, evil, death, decay. Can one hope, then, for a solution here? No, but there is another world, the moral world, the world of love, and of conscious and ideal activity. This is the world that to the hopeful lover of the good shows, amidst all its incompleteness, genuine traces of the divine will. The poet contrasts this, the moral world, as being, despite its mixture of tendencies, rather the world of "Love," with the other world, — that of "Power."

The world of "knowledge," whose facts come from without and simply mould the passive mind to accept and submit in the presence of destiny, is still further contrasted with the facts revealed in the "leap of man's quickened heart," in the "stings of his soul which dart through the barrier of flesh," and in all that striving up-

wards, that moral idealism, which is for Browning, somewhat as for Kant, the one basis for the assurance that "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world."

One is to get the final revelation in terms of decidedly moral categories. It is "rising and not resting;" it is "seeking the soul's world" and "spurning the worm's;" it is not passively "knowing," but morally acting, that is to confirm one's faith. What already tends in the present life towards such confirmation is not "knowing" the outer world, but living "my own life."

Where, among these rather manifold types of mankind, did Paracelsus stand? Was he a mystical quietist, or was he in any fashion a mere positivist? Did Browning conceive him as in substantial agreement with his own views? We need not attribute to Browning, at twenty-two years of age, any very elaborate or articulate philosophy when we conceive him taking sides concerning this ancient and familiar issue with regard to the method and the region of the divine revelation. In 'Paracelsus,' as in 'Asolando,' the general view and the terminology of the poet are identical. Paracelsus is no mystical quietist or positivist. He unites experience and intuition. But he does not look in the moral world for the divine revelation. He looks elsewhere. He belongs, then, to another class than does Browning; and to another class than do the ethical idealists who follow Kant. What is this class?

There is a type of men whom one might call the Occult Idealists, or in other words the Physical Mystics. Men of this type seem to themselves to possess overwhelmingly clear intuitions of the divinest depth: but these always relate to the spiritual interpretation of particular physical facts. The word of the Lord comes to such men, but in the form of a theoretical revelation as to the meaning of this and this in the world of outer experience. They therefore are never content in the "holy inner temples." They dislike purely speculative systems, as well as all inner

dreaming. They are very impatient, too, of the limitations of human nature. They deny such limitations. One can know whatever one is deep enough to interpret in the facts of nature. Equally, however, such men despise those mere non-mystical empiricists, who have and who respect no holy intuitions. Our empirical mystics find no facts "hard," as do the positivists, but all facts deep. They do not much believe in a God whom either speculation or meditation finds in the cloistered solitudes of the mind. They want to find him in this or in that physical fact, in this sign or wonder, in that natural symbol, in yonder reported strange cure of a sick man, in weird tales of second sight, in the still unread lore of the far East, in "psychical research," in the "subliminal self," in the stars, in the revelations of trance mediums, in the Ouija board or in Planchette, — perhaps in a pack of cards, or in the toss of a coin. Nowadays we are more or less familiar with this type of empiricists, who still rather uncritically trust their intuitions; of collectors of facts, who mean thereby to prove the reality of the universal order and of the spiritual world; they seem never quite sure of the divine omnipresence until they have looked behind this door, or have peered into that cupboard, to see whether God after all is really there.

IV.

The historical Paracelsus was, on the whole, a man of this type, — an empirical mystic who devoted himself to physical studies. For this class we have the rather awkward but almost unavoidable general name, Occultist. By Occultist we do not mean merely one who believes that there are divinely mysterious, *i. e.*, truly occult, things in our world. The Kantian or Ethical Idealist believes in such mysteries, and is in no wise an occultist. But the latter is rather one who believes in a particular method of proving and interpreting the presence of the divinely occult. This method is a sort of restless collection of quaint

and varied facts of experience. Quaint these facts must be; for what lies near at hand is never so clearly divine, to such eyes, as the distant, the uncommon, the foreign. In our own day God is to be found in the far East; here at home we can obtain him only at second hand. The Arabs and the Hindoos are the true adepts. So Browning's Paracelsus sets out on long and indefinite travels. The occultist's facts must be varied. In the Father's house are many mansions, and their furniture is extremely manifold. Astral bodies and palmistry, trances and mental healing, communications from the dead and "phantasms of the living" — such things are for some people to-day the sole quite unmistakable evidences of the supremacy of the spiritual world. Some of these things were known to the real Paracelsus; others, as varied, he also knew and prized.

The real Paracelsus was a medical man, whose philosophy and occultism were chiefly valuable in his own eyes as laying a foundation for his skill as a healer. This aspect retreats into the background in Browning's poem, for obvious reasons, such as the difficulty of employing forgotten medical lore in verse. But the Paracelsus of the poem is still both a dreamer of universal dreams and an ardent empiricist.

> What fairer seal
> Shall I require to my authentic mission
> Than this fierce energy? this instinct striving
> Because its nature is to strive?

So he tells us in the first act, where the young aspirant for a divine mission bids farewell to his two friends ere he sets out on a long wandering in search of his knowledge. But what this "striving" proves is, he says, the presence of

> God helping, God directing everywhere,
> So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
> And every object there be charged to strike,
> Teach, gratify her master God appoints.

In other words Paracelsus is going, in the service of God and man, to scour the earth in the search of numerous lost facts of some vast significance for human welfare.

To this conception of the young dreamer's life mission his friend Festus replies, with a certain wonder, that one so sure of God as Paracelsus at the outset of his great quest appears to be, might as well seek for all this healing truth near by, in

> Some one of Learning's many palaces.

Why should Paracelsus thus look for the truth only "in strange and untried paths"?

> What books are in the desert? Writes the sea
> The secret of her yearning in vast caves
> Where yours will fall the first of human feet?

Festus doubts the very sincerity of his friend's quest for knowledge, since it seems to involve scorn for all the accessible lore of the past ages of learning, and a mere resort to the accidental experiences of the aimless wanderer.

The reply of Paracelsus goes very deep into his own character, and reveals to us a certain scorn of the mediocrity of ordinary men, — a scorn often characteristic of dreamers of every type. The same reply reveals also a sense of the unique intensity of his own inner life, — a sense upon which is founded his love for lonely ways. It expresses furthermore his assurance of his immediate intuitions of the divine; and finally, it embodies a curious and very characteristic belief that this immediate intercourse with God is not of itself enough, and that it points out to him a very hard, a very long, but a very wonderful path along which he must henceforth go, — a path that is to lead to the discovery of an endless multitude of special truths, and such a multitude as it almost crazes him to contemplate. This path is the path of the collector of special facts of experience. The passage of the poem here

in question contains some of the most frequently quoted and least understood lines of the whole work. Paracelsus tells first about the moment of his discovery of his mission, when he learned the wide contrast between his own powers and calling and those of ordinary men. He then narrates his inner experience of a conversation with the divine voice that spoke in his soul at that great moment, and he closes: —

> I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first
> I ask not: but unless God send his hail
> Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
> In some time, his good time, I shall arrive.

This spirited announcement of the youthful undertaking of Paracelsus contains thoughts that many readers too lightly pass over. One is too easily deceived by this young man's ardent words. One forgets that Browning is here but the dramatic poet, who does not mean us to take these tenders for true pay. As a fact Paracelsus is by no means as inspired as he fancies. Let us analyze the situation a little. Paracelsus has already gained, as he thinks, a very deep insight into the world. God is, and Paracelsus communes with him, directly, and in his own heart. Nevertheless, he must go somewhere, for years far away, to find — what? A new religion? No, Paracelsus is no religious reformer. A new revelation of God's "intercourse" with men? This is what he himself says. In fact, however, this "intercourse," from his point of view, concerns the cause and cure of human diseases. This is indeed a grave matter, and one for a long quest. But where would the medical student of that time naturally look for the path to be followed in this quest? The reply of course would be, "some one of Learning's many palaces." One would study the traditional medical art, and would then try to improve upon it as one could. But Paracelsus rejects this way altogether. Why? Because

the immediate intuition, this direct revelation from God, shows him that not upon such traditional ways lies the goal. But if one communes thus directly with God, why not learn the secrets of the medical art at first hand, by immediate revelation, at home in solitary meditation, without wandering? This is the well-known way of some modern "mental healers." God speaks in the heart. Why try the desert and the sea-caves? Why wander through nature, looking for new remedies? The reply is that Paracelsus is a born empiricist, and cannot rest in his intuitions. They are vast, these intuitions, and immediate, but they are not enough. There is the whole big outer world, this storehouse of specimens of divine truth. One must see, feel, touch, try. In that way only can one learn God's will, and the art of healing.

Still one asks, with Festus, Did not the ancients, whom Paracelsus rejects, collect experiences in their own way? Could not one study facts wherever there are "learning's palaces" and sick men? Why wander off into the vague? If the world of experience concerns you, then, precisely as if you were a mere positivist, you need the coöperation of your fellows in your research. Why not then, like the modern ethical idealist of the Kantian type, accept the inner light as giving you ideals, but obtain also the outer world facts by the aid of public and common labours, researches, traditions? Why despise one's fellows in order to learn God's will?

Nay, our occultist must reply, just there is the rub. One wants the facts, but only as interpreted by the inner light; and the inner light, for an occultist, is not something rationally universal and human, like the insights upon which a Kantian idealist depends, but is the possession only of the favoured few. One must therefore find out God's will all alone by one's self. One may accept no help from another's eyes, no coöperation from one's meaner fellows. At best the traditions of some far off occult lore,

the secrets of unknown Oriential adepts, may be trusted as guides. This inner light of the occultist is something so personal, immediate, and precious, that one cannot believe it common to all mankind in case they only reason. Nor can one regard one's intuitions as concerning only a spiritual order, such as the natural world, as a merely phenomenal expression of man's limitations, fails to embody. One is too ardent an empiricist, and too impatient a mystic, to accept any human limitations at all. Thus then the occultist's view gets its definition. We have to take into account all the elements, the vast, immediate, private intuition, and the restless love of facts, in order to get this definition. The hard path before Paracelsus is the path of an endless collection of precisely the most novel and scattered facts of nature. Only such novel and scattered facts can be worthy of the attention of a person whose intuitions are private, immediate, and yet universal. One's intuition is that these facts somehow all belong together, as all the world is one. Therefore, the farther off, the more incoherent, the dimmer, the more "secret" the special facts, the better will they serve, when you find them, as examples of God's will; for God made them all somehow into his one world, to magnify his own power, to display his glory, to heal his suffering children. But how long the "trackless way," where indeed only God is to guide, because the entire search has no principle save the single intuition that God himself is great, and that therefore even the remotest things in time and in space are in his eyes one, since He made them, and must somehow secretly have linked them!

Here lies a sick man. What has caused his sickness? Perhaps something astral. The stars are linked to us by a divinely ordained sympathy. Astronomy is one of the "pillars of medicine." We must know the stars well, else we cannot judge about their effect upon diseases. What is best fitted to cure this patient? God of course has

provided a remedy, and has left it lying somewhere in the world, — that vast world which is all one place for God, but which, alas, is so wearily big and manifold for us. The only way is to look with the eye of a trained intuition for some hidden sign, such as quite escapes the vulgar eye, whereby the remedy of this particular disorder may be recognised when you meet with it in nature. The divine kindliness has provided each of nature's remedies with a sort of sign or label. The flowers, the leaves, the fruits of remedial plants indicate by their colours, forms, textures, the particular diseases that they are fitted to cure. This was the famous doctrine of "signatures," of which the real Paracelsus made so much. But again, only the experienced man, taught at once by the God within and by his own eyes that restlessly look hither and thither without, can learn to recognise these signs, labels, remedies. The divine apothecary (the phrase is borrowed from the real Paracelsus himself) has marked, as it were, all these his natural medicine flasks — flowers, plants, minerals — with a certain sort of occult language, and has then left them scattered about the whole world. Only a wanderer can find them. Only a philosopher, taught of God direct, can read the labels, these cryptograms of nature. Hence this possessor of intuitions must ceaselessly wander; and this wanderer must ceaselessly depend only upon the inner light to guide him. Everything in the universe is connected with everything else. Hence "the mighty range of secret truths that long for birth." Mystic links bind man, the microcosmus, to the whole of nature, the macrocosmus. The physician must know these links in order to heal. Above all must he remember that everything in nature reveals, not so much itself, as something else. The world is all symbolic. God loves, in nature, to express himself darkly by signs, portents, shadows of truth. All these concern the philosophical physician, and they are, alas, so secret, so hard to read. God, who in

the heart speaks so plainly — well, in nature He hides himself in a mystic dumb show, and helplessly gesticulates like an untaught and enthusiastic deaf-mute. Such is the essential creed of any occultist. Here is a kind of doctrine that pretends, above all, to honour God; yet, as a fact, one who pursues this "trackless way" behaves as if the God of nature were a sort of Laura Bridgman, whom the occultist first teaches to talk intelligibly.

V.

I have thus thought it right to insist upon certain characteristics of the real Paracelsus, whom Browning unquestionably had in mind as he wrote the passage the close of which has been quoted. I have dwelt long upon these characteristics because here lies the key to the whole poem. Browning has a certain deep personal fondness for the occultists. Their type fascinates him. He reads and portrays them often. Yet, on the other hand, he is never able, either in his youth, when he wrote this poem, or in later life, to share their doctrine. In 'Paracelsus' he means to set forth their great defect. He often later returns to the problem. The same theme is treated in 'The Strange Experience of Karshish.' Karshish and Paracelsus are, to borrow the speech of the occultists, different incarnations of the same spirit. Browning admires the "picker-up of learning's crumbs," the mystic who pursues the occult all through the natural world. The error of the occultist lies in supposing that God is in this way revealed, or to be found. Browning's own opinion, as poet, has a close relation to ethical idealism.

For Browning, God is truly revealed within, not without, our own human nature. Therefore, and here is the point of Browning's criticism of occultism, it is in our spiritual communion with one another, it is in our world of human loves, and even of human hates, that one gets in touch with God. When man really meets man, in love, in con-

flict, in passion, then the knowledge of God gets alive in both men. The true antithesis is not between the pure intellect and the affections; for your occultist is no partisan of the pure intellect. He, too, is in love, in mystical love, but with outer nature. Nor is the antithesis that between the scientific spirit and the spirit of active benevolence. Paracelsus, as one devoted to the art of healing, is from the first abstractly but transcendently benevolent. His is simply not the scientific spirit. The antithesis between "knowledge," as the occultist conceives it, and "love," as the poet views it, is the contrast between looking in the world of outer nature for a symbolic revelation of God, and looking in the moral world, the world of ideals, of volition, of freedom, of hope and of human passion, for the direct incarnation of the loving and the living God. The researches of the occultist are fascinating, capricious, — and resultless. It is the student of men who talks with God face to face, as a familiar friend. The occultist, peering about in the dark, sees, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, only God's back. The truly occult world is that where the lovers and the warriors meet and part. There alone God is revealed. Search as you will in the far East, in the deserts, in the sea-caves, you will never find any natural object more verily occult than are his love's eyes to the lover. Browning's mysticism thus has always an essentially human object before it. He therefore sometimes depicts, with especial fondness, the awakened occultist, who has just learned where lies the true secret of our relations with God. So it happened with Karshish, —

> Why write of trivial matters, things of price
> Calling at every moment for remark?
> I noticed on the margin of a pool
> Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
> Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Here speaks the true occultist. But now there awakens in him, unrestrainable, the new insight, which the meeting with the risen Lazarus has suggested: —

> The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too —
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> "Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> "Thou hast no power, nor mayst conceive of mine,
> "But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> "And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
> The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

It is the Christian mystery of the Incarnation that is here in question. But, as we know, Browning was no literally orthodox believer, and the essential truth of Christianity was, for him, identical with his own poetical faith that the divine plan is incarnate in humanity, in human loves, and in all deep social relationships, rather than in outer nature. A similar train of thought guides the half-conscious inspiration of the young David in the poem 'Saul,' as the singer of Israel feels after the prophecy of the Incarnation, and reaches it at last through a sort of poetic induction by the "Method of Residues." First, with all the fascination of the occultist, though with all the frank innocence of the untutored shepherd, David ransacks the whole natural world for God. As the youth is an optimist, he meets here indeed with no obstacles to his fancy; he is troubled by none of the natural mysteries that would baffle the more technical occultist; but still the story, even when most rapturously sung, when fullest of the comprehension of nature's symbolism, lacks the really divine note. God is somehow not quite revealed in all this. And hereupon David struggles, toils, pauses, hesitates, — and then, with one magnificent bound of the spirit, springs wholly beyond the world of the occultist to grasp at once the most transcendent of mysteries and the most human of commonplaces: —

> 'T is the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
> In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
> A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
> Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

It is by the light of this kind of poetic intuition of the true place of the divine in our world that Browning, in 'Paracelsus,' lets experience criticise the occultist.

VI.

As the hero, therefore, of such a critical poem, Browning chooses a mystic of the Renaissance. This mystic's creed is, on the whole, that of the real Paracelsus, — a neo-Platonic philosophy of nature. The first of its main features, as expounded in the dying speech of Paracelsus, is Monism. God is not merely above all, He is through all nature; He is included in everything. Then there is the symbolism so characteristic of the whole doctrine. Every natural process has a mystic meaning. Everything is alive, and has relations to all other things. Further, man, as microcosm, is a copy in miniature of the whole universe. Hence, in order to understand man, as a physician must do in healing diseases, one must look about in all directions, without. Thus arises the need of an endless collection of special experiences, and hence also the constant need of deep intuitions in order to comprehend the maze of facts. Every speck expands into a star. Such a search means in the end madness and despair. As a fact, for Paracelsus, the stellar world is needed to explain all sorts of phenomena in the lower regions. This view, and the doctrine of "signatures," inspired all his work, — and poisoned the very life-blood of it.

Browning, too, had his own sort of mysticism. He also was a monist. But the poet makes his hero confess that he "gazed on power" till he "grew blind." Not that way lies the truth. He who gazes not on power, but on the "weakness in strength" of the human spirit, he alone finds the way to God.

In the course of the poem, Browning brings this occultist face to face with a spiritual opponent, who tries to show him the truth, and in part succeeds. This opponent is a

typical, a universally sensitive, a thoroughly humane artist. The "lover" and the "knower" of the poet are thus explicitly the Artist and the Occultist. The doctrine that Aprile teaches is, first, that God is love, and, secondly, that the meaning of this doctrine is simply that God is the "perfect poet, who in his person acts his own creations." God, then, is related to his world as the true lover is to the desires of his own faithful heart, or as the artist is to his own inspired works. This is, indeed, mysticism, and it is neither for the young Browning nor for his characters any highly articulate theory of the world, — any technical philosophy. But it is certainly an intelligible and intuitively asserted doctrine as to how to find the divine in experience. What it asserts is this: If you want to know God, live rather than peer about you; be observant of the moral rather than of the physical world; create as the artist creates rather than collect facts as the occultist collects them; watch men rather than things; consider the secrets of the heart rather than the hopelessly mysterious symbolism of nature; be fond of the most commonplace, so long as it is the commonplace in human life, rather than of the most startling miracles of the physical world; discover new lands in man's heart, and let the deserts and the sea-caves alone; call nothing work that is not done in company with your fellow-men, and nothing true insight that does not mean work thus shoulder to shoulder with your comrades. All this, in substance, Aprile teaches; and this, and nothing else, is what he and Browning here mean by "Love." The parallelism with the later poems, 'Karshish' and 'Saul,' is emphasised in a later edition of the 'Paracelsus' by the lines added at the end of Aprile's dying speech: —

> Man's weakness is his glory — for the strength
> Which raises him to heaven and near God's self
> Came spite of it: God's strength his glory is,
> For thence came with our weakness sympathy,
> Which brought God down to earth, a man like us!

It is not the power of God as revealed in nature, but the love that in Him, as a being who is alive like us, links his perfect life to our striving, and lives in active and passionate sympathy; it is this alone which makes God comprehensible to us. For only in this attribute is He revealed to us. His other attributes are, in our present state of existence, hopelessly dark to us.

If this is true, then indeed the quest and the method of Paracelsus have been, in Browning's eyes, vain enough. Let us be frank about it. The heroic speech of Paracelsus consists of tenders and not of true pay. It is vainglorious boasting; and must be regarded as such. Or, to speak less bluntly, it is a pathetic fallacy. Paracelsus does *not* see his way as birds their trackless way. On the contrary, his instinct is false, and his way, before one reaches the very moment of his final dying enlightenment and confession, is a blind flight no-whither through the blue. God has no need to waste any hail or fire-balls on the case. Paracelsus is left to himself, and he does not arrive, except, indeed, at that very last moment, at the insight that another man ought to be formed to take his place. All this, from Browning's hopeful point of view, means no absolute failure. Our alchemist, amid all his delusions, remains a worthy tragic hero, devoted, courageous, indomitable, enduring, a soldier at heart. Even the wrath of man praises God, much more his misguided devotion. It is this devotion that to the end we honour even amid all our hero's excesses. But Paracelsus, as he is, is a sincere deceiver of his own soul, and, as far as in him lies, he is a blind guide of his fellows. Here, in the contrast between the truth that lies, after all, so near to his ardent spirit, and the error that is, despite this fact, so hopeless, is the tragedy. Were the truth not so near, the error, indeed, would not be so hopeless. Were the man not so admirably strenuous, he might be converted before his death-bed. He is no weakling, but a worthy companion of Faust. Yet just herein lies his earthly ruin.

VII.

Let us now apply the central idea of the poem to its action in a brief review. Paracelsus the occultist aspires, bids farewell to his friends, and then sets out on his great quest. Years later we find him, older, but hardly wiser, at the house of the Greek conjurer in Constantinople, where he seeks magic enlightenment as to his future. The reply to his request comes in the shape of the sudden meeting with that mysterious figure, the dying poet Aprile, who has come to this place upon a similar errand after a life of failure. The two men meet, and, in the wondrous scene which follows, Paracelsus learns and, as far as his poor occult wit comprehends it, accepts the ideal of the poet, who "would love infinitely and be loved." The characters here brought into tragic conflict, the "lover" and the "knower," are the Artist and the Occultist. Both are enthusiasts, both have sought God, both have longed to find out how to benefit mankind. There is no clash of reason with sentiment. On the contrary, neither of these men is in the least capable of ever becoming a reasoner; both are dreamers; both have failed in what they set out to do. There is no contrast of "love," as Christian charity or practical humanitarianism, with "knowledge" as something more purely contemplative. Aprile is no reformer. He longed to do good, but as an artist; he longed to create, but as a maker of the beautiful. His ideal attitude is, in its way, quite as contemplative as is that of Paracelsus. This "knower" is a physician. This artist, with all his creative ideals, longs to "love" by apprehending the works of God as shown forth in the passions of man.

The real contrast lies in the places where the two men have sought for God, and in the degrees of strenuousness with which they have pursued the quest. The artist has sought God in the world of human passion, Paracelsus in

the magical and secret places of outer nature. The artist has no cause to repent his choice of God's abode; God is, to his eyes, even too dazzlingly and obviously there in human hearts, lives, forms, and deeds. The occultist has been baffled despite his labours. In strenuousness, Paracelsus has had by far the advantage. In this he is indeed the king. But had Paracelsus combined Aprile's ideals and powers with his own strenuousness, what a kingdom might by this time have become his! Such is the obvious significance of this wonderful scene.

Now let us attempt an explanation of the vicissitudes and of the degradation of our hero's later career. The dying legacy of Aprile to Paracelsus is the counsel not to wait for perfection, but to do what the time permits while life lasts. Accepting this counsel, but very dimly apprehending the meaning of the artist's ideal of "love," and falsely supposing himself to have "attained," where he had only vaguely and distantly conceived, the occultist now resolves to show his love for mankind in more immediate practical relations with them. The artist has counselled just such closer relations, and this is all that Paracelsus has been able as yet to comprehend. The result is the abortive life in the professorship in Basel. To Paracelsus it seems that the actual spirit of the dead Aprile is after all unable or unwilling to do anything for him. One preaches occultism to his students, supposing himself to be acting in the sense of the artist who had counselled him to get nearer to men's hearts. But the words of these lectures sound hollow even to one's own ears, and so one is driven to "bombast." The few "crumbs" of learning, picked up through all those years of wandering, appear now as nothing to the mysteries still unlearned. One had not known, in fact, how small was one's store of collections until after he had burned the books of Galen and the rest, and then had actually begun to teach. One must now resort to boasting, charlatanry, melancholy, self-reproach, and foreboding. The man is too

ardent of purpose to admit in public his own defect, but too really noble of soul to tolerate in the least his own charlatanry. God is now indeed far off. The artist said that one found him best and most among living men. But in this lecture-room the poor occultist, peer as he will, can discover with certainty only a mass of fools. The most occult, the darkest, the most fearsome of all the arts turns out to be the art of pedagogy, — the one truly creative art whereby Paracelsus could have hoped to enter Aprile's world.

The inevitable downfall comes, and Paracelsus is driven from Basel. His indomitable temper wins our admiration even after we have learned the utter uselessness of all his magic arts. He now gives us a new version of Aprile's doctrine as he conceives it. In the song, "Over the sea our galleys went," he depicts the hopelessness of trying to come into close relations with men by the devices that are within his own reach. Unlike the real Paracelsus, he can be a poet, but not, like Aprile, an artist comprehending and depicting other men. In his chaos of excitement, in his lamentation over his failure, — yes, in his cups, one must add, — he can sing in verse his own tragedy, not the meaning of any life but his own. At length he seems to see the truth. What Aprile really meant must have been that a man must live, — a short life and a full one, in loneliness, in chaos, but at any rate in a whirlwind of passion. Thus alone can one learn to know. The occultist shall be joined now with the man of passion. Thus, once again, Paracelsus aspires.

An occultist must finish his days magically. From weary dreams and furious delirium the dying seer miraculously arises, full of seeming vigour and of cool insight, to tell to his friend what knowledge he has attained at this supreme moment. Now at last we do indeed learn the truth. Paracelsus has not "arrived" at what he sought, an earthly mission; but he now sees why he has failed.

The old mystical monism was right; but as the seer depicts it before us, a new spirit has come into it. The story of the world is right as of old; but the artist alone had put the true interpretation upon it. Could the Paracelsus of former days but have understood in his time what love meant, could he but have known how all the waves and eddies of human passion, even when they seem farthest from the divine, reveal God as no object in outer nature, however wonderful, can ever do, — the occultist would not have aspired in vain! He would have been transformed, as the man of the future shall be, into the artist. This is the final message of Paracelsus, and the meaning of the whole tale.

'LURIA.'

By JOHN WHITE CHADWICK.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Jan. 23, 1894.]

Browning's 'Luria' appeared in 1846 as the eighth and last part of 'Bells and Pomegranates,' a series which began in 1841 with 'Pippa Passes.' Passes what? asked the dull critic; and Alfred Domett made answer, "The comprehension of the critic," though why it should have done so, passes ours. And certainly it was not 'Luria' that Browning sent to Mr. Justice Coleridge, and which for the most part so baffled his intelligence that Browning said, "Ah, well! If a reader of your calibre understands ten per cent of what I write, I think he ought to be content." Not to understand nine tenths of 'Luria' and the best part of another, one must be dull indeed. And I am glad to treat of one of those simpler works which has in it no encouragement for those who like Browning because they do not like poetry.

In the whole range of the 'Bells and Pomegranates,' obscurity was the exception, clearness was the rule. But it was too late. 'Sordello,' "that colossal derelict upon the ocean of poetry," as it has been aptly called, had been set adrift in 1840; and like a phantom ship, it kept the open sea and scared away the ventures of appreciation that might otherwise have given to the poet's other craft a timid and then bolder hail. How else can we explain the fact that a succession of poems, related to the genius of Browning very much as Tennyson's volumes of 1842 are related to the genius of Tennyson, including such dramas as 'Pippa'

and 'Luria,' 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' and 'Colombe's Birthday,' not to speak of others, — such wonderful things as 'In a Gondola,' 'England in Italy,' 'Italy in England,' 'The Lost Leader,' 'How they brought the Good News,' and 'The Pied Piper,' — how otherwise than by the bad name of 'Sordello' can we explain the fate of Browning's reputation for a period of twenty years, a fate so cruel that, about 1860, there was a period of six months for which his publishers could not report a single copy of his poems sold. "There were always a few people," he wrote in 1865, "who had a certain opinion of my poems; but nobody cared to speak what he thought, or the things printed twenty-five years ago would not have waited so long for a good word; but at last a new set of men arrive. . . . All my new cultivators are young men; more than that I observe that some of my old friends don't like at all the irruption of outsiders who rescue me from their sober and private approval and take those words out of their mouth 'which they always meant to say' and never did."

'Luria,' in its first appearance, elicited from Landor his well-known commendation, — praise which might well console the poet for much popular indifference. But there is an accent of discouragement and despondency in Browning's dedication, — "this last attempt for the present at dramatic poetry." Evidently he had been "frustrate of his hope" to write not only great dramatic poetry, but good acting plays. Something of accident as well as something of inherent defect had operated to this end with 'Strafford' and 'The Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' however it may have been with 'Colombe's Birthday.' Only these three of his plays have, I believe, been put upon the stage. Mr. Lawrence Barrett once poured into my private ear his enthusiasm for 'The Blot in the 'Scutcheon' as a good acting play, and I think he put it on the boards with some success. But Mr. Lawrence Barrett always "wanted finer bread than can be made with wheat." He liked to do the daring thing, to

assume an intelligence and ideality in the community of play-goers equal to his own. The most of us would wonder less at the failure of any play of Browning's than at its success.

'Luria' was never offered to the managers. The characters and situations are sufficiently dramatic. They are intensely so; but the monologues are many, and the thought, though clear, is so compact and crowded that only "the harvest of a quiet eye" is equal to its complete ingathering. A second, third, or dozenth reading will not exhaust its liberal reserves of beauty and its wealth of moral inspiration.

One of the many readings ought to be comparative, taking the first edition and the last together. Such a reading would be instructive in regard to Browning's real or imaginary indifference to formal excellence. We have his own satirical self-accusation: "This bard's a Browning; he neglects the form." It does not look so here. The changes that he made in 'Luria' are, as I count them, one hundred and sixty-two! A few of these may be the two or three parts of the change a single line or phrase has undergone. It is evident that he has returned upon his work with a remorseless hand; and the changes will be found to be improvements almost every time. They are few in the first and second acts; many in the other three. They admit us very intimately to the workings of the poet's mind and art. They are not all for better sense; a good many are for better sound.

The inquiry what relation Browning's story has to anything actual in the course of history is not a very interesting one, but it may give us momentary pause. The results attainable do but confirm our general impression that Browning had a true Shakespearian indifference to the mere facts of history, but less dependence than Shakespeare on some legend, history, or play as the initiative impulse of his work. That Florence made up a final and successful

war against Pisa in 1406 is pretty nearly the sum total of the facts contained in 'Luria,' at least so far as I have yet discovered in Trollope's History, Von Reumont's 'Medici,' and other books relating to the time. The successful leader of the Florentines in this war was no mercenary soldier, but Gino Capponi, — one of the greatest of a noble family, whose son Neri was the historian of the war, as was the father of the Ciompi popular rising of 1378. If I seem unduly sensitive on this point, it may be because I lodged in Florence in the Capponi Palace on the Arno, just below the Ponte San Trinità, where from my window I could see the black scum from the charcoal-burners' huts up in the mountains (mentioned in Browning's 'By The Fireside') come swirling down the stream, where Michel Angelo had been a frequent visitor and had designed a fireplace for some lady of the house ; let us, till we know better, think it was for her whom they poisoned at a ball in the great Strozzi Palace just across the bridge, and brought back to die, I will be bound, in our great room where you could swing a cat of the royal Bengal tiger family, twelve feet from tip to tip.

As Luria cannot be identified, so cannot Braccio or Puccio or Domizia. But there are circumstances in the history, here and there, from which the poet may have got a hint. Thus, in 1397, an attempt to restrict the power of the Albizzi, the rivals of the *novi* Medici, ended in the exile or death of the ringleaders, among whom were some of the Medici. Hence, possibly, the suggestion of Domizia. If we cannot identify Luria, we can find facts in abundance corresponding to his relation to the Seigniory and city. Sir John Hawkwood, one of Fuller's "worthies," died in 1394, and he was the most famous mercenary Florence ever had in her employ ; but he was an Englishman, and was always treated well, getting at one time one hundred and thirty thousand gold florins for *not* fighting on the other side. When he died, he had a splendid funeral, and was buried in

Santa Maria del Fiore, where you can see his equestrian portrait in *grisaille* by Paolo Ucelli, on the interior of the façade. In 1342, Walter de Brienne, another mercenary soldier, had put himself at the head of the lower classes and made himself master of the city, and so perhaps had lent some argument to Braccio's creed; but to his attitude of suspicion and distrust we have a remarkable correspondence in a passage quoted by Mr. Cooke, in his invaluable 'Guide-Book,' from Sapio Amminato's History. It tells how three commissaries were sent with the army against Pisa, and explains, "For although we have every confidence in the honour and fidelity of our general, you see it is always well to be on the safe side. And in the matter of receiving possession of a city — we know the ways of these nobles with the old feudal names! An Orsini might be as bad in Pisa as a Visconti, so we might as well send some of our own people to be on the spot." Here is a clue, a palpable clue, to Browning's situation. Moreover, Bartoldo Orsini, the original leader of the expedition, was, if not a Moorish mercenary, a Ventusian captain in the pay of Florence. Apparently his character justified the caution of the Seigniory in sending commissaries along with him, for his command was taken from him and given to another, one Obizzo da Monte Corelli, and, finally, to Gino Capponi, who brought the enterprise to a successful termination. "When a god would ride," says Emerson, "anything serves him for a chariot;" and when Browning came upon this passage in Amminato, he had one with two horses, the Ventusian captain and the commissary spies. Given so much, anybody that had a mind to could write Browning's 'Luria.' Nothing was wanting but the mind.

If there is little of the mere fact of history reproduced in 'Luria,' of its spiritual essence there is no lack. As in 'Othello' we breathe the air of Venice, thick-spiced with Eastern gums, — the air that wafted Columbus over seas, the air of brave adventure that blew everywhere in the

sixteenth century, so insatiably curious, so deep in love with wonder and surprise, — so in 'Luria' we breathe the air of Florence, as it caressed things new and old upon her streets, the towers, and palaces, and churches, which were already her delight five centuries ago, and still hold themselves proudly up for our felicity. The Florence of that time had still much history to make, and much to do in architecture, painting, sculpture, to fill up the measure of our present thought of her. Not without effort can we think of her without Raphael and Michel Angelo and Fra Angelico; without Savonarola; but many other Florentine names now famous were in 1406 the names of the unborn: Gozzoli, Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, Mantegna, Francia, Bartolommeo. Masaccio was a baby; Fra Angelico was not yet Friar John, and would not be the angelical for a century to come. But Gentile da Fabriano was some forty years of age; and of all the pictures that we know in Florence, his 'Adoration of the Magi' is the one that would have delighted most the soul of Luria could he have lived to see its splendid pageantry. It was painted in 1423, so that my "could he have lived" has, you will see, a double sense.

And yet how much that makes our thought of Florence rich and glad and wonderful was then already history and architecture and frescoed wall, and beauty breathing from the painter's canvas and the sculptor's stone! Dante had been dead three quarters of a century and more; and on the narrow Via San Martino was the narrower house where he was born, much as we see it now, and only a few rods away was his beautiful San Giovanni, the Baptistery where Dante was himself baptised in 1265, though, as Luria saw it, it had not the "gates of Paradise" which Ghiberti was commissioned to cast in 1403, but did not complete till 1424 and 1452. There, too, was the Bargello, nearly half a century old; and the Palazzo Vecchio, whose tower had for a century lifted up its "tall flower-like stem" to the

Italian sky; and close to that the New Palace of the Seigniory, in whose spirit and details the Renaissance was bursting into bloom; and not far away the more beautiful Or San Michele, begun in 1350 and completed in 1412; so that, most probably, Luria had this in mind, when forecasting the new burst of art that peace would bring upon the trail of war he prophesied.

> 'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
> The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
> . . . . . .
> The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.

Best of all, that thing of beauty, Giotto's campanile, which has been a joy for five long centuries, was then the freshest wonder and delight, completed, as it was, in 1387; albeit more beautiful to-day than it was then, as everybody knows who has compared the warm, rich, mellow colour of its incrustation with that of the Duomo's, now but seven years old. Wherefore it seems that Luria was not drawing on the future when he imagined "beautiful Florence at a word laid low," and caught his breath to say, —

> Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
> Not even in a dream, that outrage!

One dome, however, and the greatest, had not yet begun to be, that of the Duomo di Santa Maria del Fiore; for though the church was begun by Arnolfo, in 1294, the dome of which Michel Angelo said, "Better than thee I cannot, but like thee I will not," was not undertaken by Brunelleschi till 1420, nor finished till 1434. Of Luria's Duomo all that remains to us is a short stretch of wall back from the front on either side. He had, you will remember, —

> his fancy how a Moorish front
> Might join to, and complete the body, . . .
> A Moorish front, nor of such ill design.

He made a charcoal sketch of it upon the curtain of his tent. Mr. Cooke tells us that a sketch for such a front has

actually been discovered. But neither Moorish, Gothic, nor Renaissance façade was built until our day. Begun in 1875, it was finished in 1886; and it is rich enough to please a fancy rich as Luria's with all the ardors of the orient earth and sky.

The æsthetic life of Florence does not find more apt expression in the course of 'Luria' than its sharp, intellectual subtlety. That is merely incidental; this is the stuff of which the character of Braccio is made. Machiavelli was not born till 1469; but the seeds and weak beginnings of the politics which he embodied in 'The Prince' had long existed in the State, controlling its domestic and its foreign policy alike, — "the broad sure ground" of Braccio that every man was selfish at the core, a knave at heart. True to the life also is that idealisation, that impersonation of Florence, as if it were a living creature to admire and hate and love and scorn and live for or die for, as the need might be. Dante's great poem overflows with this personification and the appropriate sentiments in heaven and hell and on the purgatorial stairs, as it does also with the factional and party jealousies and hatreds that threaten to burn up Domizia's noble heart.

But all these things are nothing to the one thing in 'Luria,' the play, that makes it an unspeakable possession, for this is Luria, the man. In dramatic art, this kind of thing is always and unquestionably the best, — the creation of a splendid personality, heaven or hell inspired; but if of heaven, so much the better, for it is by the beauty of holiness, the height of character, that we are drawn to better things much more than we are driven back on them by the monstrous vision of things hateful and unclean. The tragedy which depends upon the poetic justice meted out in the fifth act to teach its moral lesson, comes in no questionable shape, as Shakespeare used the phrase. It is too obviously a ghost for us to question it. If Desdemona, when her Moor "puts out the light and then — puts out

the light," and Cordelia strangled on the breast of Lear, do not allure us by their intrinsic qualities, Shakespeare has failed of his intent. The true function of the dramatist is to create men and women who think, speak, and act, not as he would have them, but as they must, and always with the accent of their individual life. When the creation is a personality that conquers us by its intrinsic grace and charm, so that we feel that we would rather far be such an one in any misery or distress than to forego such excellence, then literature and ethics have met together; righteousness and art have kissed each other. So have they done in Browning's 'Luria.' His Moor of Florence is such a personality.

He has, it seems to me, the reality, the solidity, of the best dramatic art. He is no charcoal sketch, like his own of the Duomo, which won Domizia's approving smile. We have no flat colour here, nor low relief, but such modelling that you can walk around it and look at it from every side. Browning could not have created him without often thinking of the Moor of Venice, and we follow in his steps, finding here another large and simple nature, with the breath and freedom of the desert places in his manners and his speech. His words drink colour up from his own East. His images are all reversions to his former state, as where he argues with himself in favour of a faith built up on calm sagacity.

> Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go!
> Yes — when the desert creature's heart, at fault
> Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
> Betrays its step into the pathless drift —
> The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
> By the sole bearing of the visible star,
> Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subsides,
> The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again, —
> The palm trees, and the pyramid over all.

The sun is in his talk, as in his blood.

> Ah, we Moors get blind
> Out of our proper world, where we can see!
> The sun that guides is closer to us! There —
> There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky!

So in that passage which is better known than any other in the play, and has done more royal service: —

> My own East!
> How nearer God we were! He glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours:
> We feel him, nor by painful reason know!
> The everlasting minute of creation
> Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
> . . . . . .
> His hand is still engaged upon his world.

In the continuance of this splendid passage, we find that Luria, for all his elemental largeness and simplicity, is no mere pulse of feeling, — no, nor was from the beginning. He had not escaped the fascination of the Tuscan mind, whereby his native hue of resolution had been somewhat sicklied o'er; but that mind has drawn him from afar by laying hold of something in him kindred to itself. "And inasmuch," he says, —

> as Feeling, the East's gift,
> Is quick and transient — comes, and lo, is gone —
> While Northern Thought is slow and durable,
> Surely a mission was reserved for me,
> Who, born with a perception of the power
> And use of the North's thought for us of the East
> Should have remained, turned knowledge to account,
> Giving Thought's character and permanence
> To the too transitory feeling there —
> Writing God's message plain in mortal words.

To which Domizia's answer is, and Browning's too, no doubt, that Northern Thought needed his Eastern Feeling more than this needed the Northern Thought. He is one, —

> Whose life re-teaches us what life should be:
> What faith is, loyalty and simpleness.

Not only have we in Luria "a free and open nature that thinks men honest when they seem to be so," after the manner of Othello, but in Braccio we have his intellectual antithesis, as in Shakespeare's play we have Iago. But whereas in Iago's unmoralised, unconsecrated intellect we have a badness so unmitigated and complete that we have sometimes wondered whether we have here a character or merely the personification of a quality of mind, in Braccio we have a nature not incapable of nobleness nor of responding to its touch. Iago's love of mischief is a love of art for art's sake. He has no definite purpose. He has no least anticipation of the hecatomb of victims that will drench the altar of his hate. But as he works his scheme, the mischief has for him an ever-deepening fascination. He is caught and hurried onward in the rush of his own ecstasy of crime. But Braccio's end is clearly apprehended, and it is a worthy end, — the good of Florence. He is devoted to her cause, her safety, her pre-eminence. Nor does he stain his fair intentions with foul acts, if I may turn about Sir Thomas Browne. He is completely his own dupe. In arguing that Luria must abuse his power and victory, he thinks that he is going on the broad sure ground, — "the corruption of man's heart." Even if he had felt less confident of this, he would have given Florence and not Luria the benefit of his doubt. With this major premise, "Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost," the minor one need not be much to insure a conclusion fatal to the Moor, especially when this minor premise is not only compounded of such things as Luria's simplicity and incomprehensible generosity (as where he had sent back Tiburzio's cohort) had furnished, but is qualified with the necessity of making Florence safe at any cost. Safe! not merely from another despot, — that was not the worst, as Braccio's imagination prefigured the event. The worst was Luria's barbaric force, so offensive to his pride of intellect.

> Brute-force shall not rule Florence! Intellect
> May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies: —
> But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad.

Lapo, his secretary, considering less curiously, less certain of his major premise, so construing less sternly Luria's "petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts," moreover, without Braccio's passionate jealousy for Florence and her rule by Intellect alone, leans to the side of Luria early in the game.

> That man believes in Florence as the Saint
> Tied to his wheel believes in God!

But Braccio is not convinced. He is no more convinced by Luria's tearing of the unopened letter that declared his doom. And when he (Braccio), acknowledging the truth, argues his case for Florence against Luria, we half expect that Luria will side with him against himself, so evidently is Braccio's love of Florence and his devotion to her good the mainspring of his life. What compared with hers is any individual life? What had been Luria without her? So great is Braccio's confidence in his position that when Luria reminds him that he is the captain of a conquering army and can call in his troops to arbitrate, and asks Braccio what he will do in that event, Braccio makes answer, —

> I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
> That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
> And so was saved.

He will make the very stones of Florence cry against the all-exacting, nought-enduring Luria. "Reward! you will not be worth punishment." I sometimes wonder if this mingling of the good and bad in Braccio's mind and action does not teach the most important lesson of the play; if here is not the essence of the tragedy, as everywhere in life, the "captive good attending captain ill," the imperceptible but sure degrees by which the generous motive or the kindly disposition slips into the character of vice and crime.

The antithesis of 'Luria,' — the heart against the head, spontaneity against reflection, impulse against calculation, — nothing is more characteristic of Browning than this. He returns to it a hundred times. He never wearies of its illustration. He applauds it in 'Ivan Ivanovitch,' in 'The Statue and the Bust,' and in 'Cristina.' Rightly interpreted, as Mr. Henry Jones has shown conclusively, the opposition between head and heart is "that between a concrete experience, instinct with life and conviction and a mechanical arrangement of abstract arguments." This is the antithesis of Luria and Braccio. Luria's feeling, heart, spontaneous impulse, is the manifold experience of his own and many other lives concentrated in the vision of the hour. His faith is organized experience, character sublimated to nature. First thoughts are best in morals because they are the expression of the total man, not of his mere logic-chopping understanding. When this is brought to bear upon the mandatory deliverance of a good conscience, it is generally because the voice of conscience seems too stern, and we are seeking some excuse from doing its entire behest; and questioning the obvious good of other men is pretty sure to find the flaw it seeks. This was what Jesus called the sin against the Holy Ghost, so hard to be forgiven. Why, but because to be forgiven, we must first believe in the forgiving heart. This is Braccio's sin. His is that casuist's return on the simplicity, nay, the coherent unity of the moral sentiment, which paralyses faith, and which, as Browning's dialectic has so often shown, can make white black, wrong right, and heaven hell. His defect, whatever Browning meant it to appear, was not excess of intellect or lack of heart, but that he had in him the mind of Rochefoucauld, and not "the mind of Christ."

And still we dally in the porch of 'Luria's' significance for our moral life. Step we across the threshold and look up, and its great dome overarches us like Brunelleschi's

there on that Duomo in whose shadow Luria liked to see the happy people keeping festival. What is it but the daily miracle of the development of character by the influence of personality? This is how virtue can be taught. This it is that wears the fine old motto *noblesse oblige*, but with a difference, for it is the nobility which shames our weakness and complacency and compels us to rise into its height, compels us to believe in nobleness; wish it might be ours; will it to be so. But our life is so different from that of this mercenary Moor fighting against Pisa, Lucca, and Siena a hundred years before Columbus came, "sailing straight on into chaos untried"! Our battle-fields are such narrow ones, hemmed in by the four walls of kitchens, nurseries, counting-rooms, manufactories, school-rooms, and the like. Our enemies do not come up against us with swords and spears, with musketry and cannon. They are not foreign enemies. They house in our own breasts. They are the passions lurking there, — the selfishness, the greed, the anger, the revenge, the base indifference to social good, the aimlessness and idleness, the slack performance of our daily work, our railing accusation of the bad, as if we knew what blasts had blown upon them from the tropic or the arctic zone. True, very true! But Luria's real battle-field was narrower than any street in Florence, any nursery or counting-room in Boston or New York. It was his own clouded, rent, and bursting heart, — to love Florence as Othello Desdemona, and to know that she had played him false. There are such battles raging all the time in proud and humble hearts upon our streets, though we do not suspect it, except now and then, when, with Emily Dickinson, we

> like a look of agony
> Because we know it 's true.

And the help to fight such battles comes from whence? From men and women who touch our lives in the same way as Puccio's and Jacopo's and Domizia's and Braccio's

were touched by Luria's. The circumstances are never twice the same. The spiritual laws are as invariable as those which keep the stars from wrong; and that which Luria did somewhere between Florence and Pisa, or nowhere save in Browning's glorious imagination, is being done by thousands and tens of thousands whom no poet ever sings; and that which those plotting and counter-plotting against Luria had done for them by his nobility, thousands and tens of thousands every day are having done for them by men and women who are no Lurias in their height of circumstance, but only in their height of soul. They conquer by the vision of a truth and goodness whose beseeching cannot be withstood. It is not anything they say, but what they do, that is their criticism on our folly, and their invitation and incitement to the higher things. The most of us can find such without painful searching. We desire them, and they are sitting at our doors. One of the best in literature is Browning's Luria. In literature and life they furnish us the increments by which "inexhaustibly the spirit grows" in power and use and happy faith in Nature, Man, and God. Let us walk, our weak hands in their strong hands.

> Through such souls alone
> God stooping shows sufficient of his light
> For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

'THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.'

By GAMALIEL BRADFORD, Jr.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, April 24, 1894.]

It requires some courage to present oneself as an outsider and critic before a company of professed lovers and students of a poet like Browning. To appreciate fully a writer of such breadth and volume, to get oneself into his inner life, to nestle in his brain, as Emerson says of Plato, it seems almost necessary to have spent years in his company, to have grown up with him, to have tried and tested him in all moods and on all occasions. My own acquaintance with Browning has not been of this nature. It has been less a gradual growth of insight into new beauty and helpfulness than the result of systematic critical study; and I therefore myself recognise in it a tendency to insist, perhaps too strongly, on the literary side rather than on the emotional and moral. I do not wish, however, for a minute to lose sight of the fact that Browning's great influence and importance are largely owing to the ethical quality of his work.

Of the dramas of Browning two only are, properly speaking, historical: 'Strafford' and 'King Victor and King Charles.' 'Paracelsus' may rather be called biographical, if even that. In 'The Return of the Druses,' however, though neither characters nor incidents appear to have any historical foundation, so much reference is made to the manners and religion of a very peculiar people, that I feel it necessary to call your attention first to that portion of my subject.

The small tribe known by the name of Druses and inhabiting the southern part of the region of Mt. Lebanon, has been for ages a marked and distinct race, holding aloof equally from their Maronite Christian neighbours and from the Mohammedan Turks. Their religion and history, though they have been made the subject of a good deal of study, still remain involved in some obscurity. It is not even positively known from what division of mankind they originally sprang. Though Arabic in speech, good authorities tell us that they are not Arabic by blood. The tradition referred to in Browning's play, that they are descended from a body of Crusaders, led by a wandering Count of Dreux, seems to be entirely unfounded, and is even anachronistic as used by Browning, since it was not invented till the sixteenth century. They themselves have a theory that they are connected by race with China, and that many devotees of their creed are to be found in that country. The latest authority that I have consulted, Mr. Haskett Smith, maintains in all seriousness that they are the lineal offspring of the Masons who built King Solomon's Temple, and instances in proof of this that one of them pressed his hand with the precise grip peculiar to modern free-masonry, and seemed to be initiate in other mysteries of the craft.

Whatever be the origin of the Druses, the life they lead seems more closely akin to Semitic than to European habits. They are monogamists in theory, but divorce is very common among them, almost as common as in some parts of the United States.

The Druses, like the Arabs and other pastoral races, are noted for their hospitality. Every one who has had anything to do with them dwells on this side of their character. At the same time, while ever ready to welcome the stranger and receive him within their doors, they are singularly uncommunicative and reluctant to impart any of the secrets of their religion. It is this which makes it so extremely difficult to get at the facts about them, and it is

only by actual theft that enthusiastic travellers have been able to possess themselves of any of the sacred Druse writings. In one case, at least, the fanaticism of these people was carried so far that they burned the house of a man who had stolen valuable manuscripts in order that they might be destroyed.

Nevertheless the nineteenth century is persistent when its curiosity is once aroused, and opposition only whets its ardour. It is possible nowadays to glean from various sources a fairly good general idea of the Druse religion both as to history and as to doctrines. Before the actual appearance of Hakim, the way was prepared by a schism in the Mohammedan religion caused by the sect of the Shiis and afterwards developing in a variety of forms, the main tendency of which was to refine and subtilise the sternly practical note of the Koran by allegorical and mystical interpretations. These later abnormal phases of Mohammedanism may, I suppose, be traced to the influence of Alexandrian Platonism and Platonised Christianity. At any rate they lent themselves admirably to the devices of an ingenious priesthood, who conceived a complicated system of initiation into the profounder doctrines, and by means of it worked upon the natural enthusiasm and credulity of the Oriental peoples.

The especial doctrines of the Druse religion depend, however, upon what might almost be called a historical accident. In the year 1019 the Khalif Hakim Biamrillahi began to reign in Alexandria. He offers us one of those instances in history where an average brain and heart come into possession of absolute power and are completely besotted by it, toppled over into the very insanity of tyranny. In this he was like Nero and Caligula, and, like them also, he came, after a few years of supreme domination, to regard himself as raised above the ordinary level of mankind, as the incarnation of the Deity on earth. The Oriental temper, at once more servile and more fanatical

than the Aryan, enabled him to indulge this delusion with far more freedom than did his Roman predecessors. We are told by the historian that "those who sought audience of him were obliged to say on entering his presence: 'Hail, thou One and only One, who givest life and death, who bestowest riches and poverty.' Nothing pleased him more than this salutation. One of his adulators, having entered the place of prayer at Mecca, struck the black stone which is there with his spear, and cried out, 'O fools! Why do you bow down to and kiss that which can neither benefit nor injure you, while you neglect him who is in Egypt, who has the issues of life and death in his hands?'" On one occasion, being exasperated by some slight attempt at resistance, "he called together his council and the chief officers of his army, and gave the latter orders to surround Cairo, set fire to it, pillage it, and massacre all its inhabitants who showed any resistance. The African troops and his own corps of slaves proceeded to execute his orders with the greatest alacrity. The inhabitants endeavoured to defend themselves, but in vain. The fire gained ground on all sides, and the work of pillage and massacre went on for three entire days. Hakim, in the mean time, went daily to the heights of Karafa, where he could have a good view of the fighting and hear the cries of the combatants. Coolly pretending not to know what was happening, he asked the standers-by what was the cause of these disturbances, and on being told that the troops and slaves were sacking the town, he exclaimed: 'The curse of God be upon them! Who gave them orders to do it?'"

This interesting personage is the Messiah of the Druse religion, the incarnate Deity who is supposed to have reappeared in the Djabal of Browning's play. Sects have been founded by saints, by philosophers, by fanatics, even by voluptuaries; but I doubt whether there is any record of another religion which has at the bottom of it a liar, a

murderer, and a maniac combined. It is to the credit of human nature that the worship of Hakim did not survive him in the country which was immediately fresh and smarting from his atrocities, but was only maintained in the far distant land of Lebanon, where, under the austere and melancholy cedars, any vestiges of historical fact that may have lingered in it were soon shrouded in the silver mist of mythical tradition. The first missionary who preached this new creed was Ismael Darazzi. Darazzi began by asserting Hakim's claim to divinity in Cairo, but Mussulman orthodoxy revolted, and the enthusiastic Apostle was obliged to fly. He betook himself to the Lebanon and there preached to the Druses, who, however, according to one tradition, had not before been known by that name, but received it as being followers of Darazzi. This is one of the instances, like that of Amerigo Vespucci, where a name gets attached in the wrong place; for the Druses of a later day came to regard Darazzi with all possible detestation, after he had been anathematised by the later and more popular prophet Hamzé.

This Hamzé, more politic than Darazzi, kept his position at Hakim's side until the death or disappearance of the latter, and then became the real elaborator and founder of Hakim-worship. The inconvenient escapades above alluded to, which would seem so inconsistent with the character of a candidate for divine honours, were explained by Hamzé in a mystical fashion. "A letter has reached me," he writes in one of his works, "on the part of some of our brother Unitarians," — the Druses are very proud of the name Unitarian, — "in which they state certain remarks which have been made by some men void of all religion, who give a licence to their tongues conformable to the nature of their works, as regards the actions of our Lord and of all the things which he permitted to be done in his presence. These actions, however, contain infinite wisdom (but all warning is thrown away upon them) and are far different

from those of this gross and ignorant world, whose works are, for the most part, but a jest and a play. They do not know — those persons — that all the actions of our Lord — whether in play or in earnest, are filled with infinite richness and depth, the wisdom of which he will make known in his own good time."

It would be, of course, impossible to give in limited space any detailed account of the doctrines of the Druse religion. Those who are curious on the subject may consult the two thick octavo volumes which De Sacy has devoted to it. The fundamental dogma is that the One God has no attributes whatever. Intelligence, Universal Intelligence, is the first of his creatures, but is represented as a creature only in order that the total lack of determination in the Deity may not be interfered with. The One God has appeared on earth in ten successive incarnations, of which Hakim is the last and will remain so, until he himself re-appears at the appointed day. Just as the Deity is incarnated in these various human shapes, so the Universal Intelligence also appears in each successive incarnation as an accompanying prophet, and thus we have a place conveniently arranged for Hamzé. It has occurred to me that Browning may have had this in mind when he introduces Khalil in the play as the companion of Djabal, though I do not remember anything that would actually indicate it. The relation of Drusism to Christianity is much that of Mohammedanism: that is, Christ, though not looked upon as properly divine, is given a high place in the list of prophets.

The Druses hold the doctrine of transmigration, and say — curiously enough — that the number of souls in existence is fixed and unchangeable; and further that the proportion belonging to all religions is equally fixed. When a Mohammedan dies, his soul passes into another Mohammedan, and a Christian into a Christian. But when a Druse dies, his soul may, after a life of especial purity and

holiness, pass away from earth and enter into an angel or some superior heavenly being. On the other hand, after a debased and evil life, it may have to pass to some lower animal, a dog, a wolf, or a tiger. Thus they believe that the way of eternal life is only to be found in their religion; but they hold that they and they only are in danger of damnation.

According to Churchill, whose book is interesting, though extremely disorderly, the Druses make use neither of religious ceremonial nor of prayer. The *Ockals*, or initiates, who are supposed to have penetrated all the mysteries of religion, form, it is said, about fifteen per cent of the adult population, and the remainder, *Jóhals*, as they are called, simply obey, their refusal to give information to strangers being probably largely founded on their own ignorance. As Hotspur says: —

> I well believe
> Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know
> And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate.

Morally the Druses observe with considerable strictness the injunction laid upon them by their religion. Their conduct in regard to marriage I have already referred to. The rest of the moral law is laid down in the seven laws, which are given with considerable differences in different writers. You will find a statement of them, on apparently excellent authority, in the 'Browning Cyclopædia.' Strict and entire veracity is everywhere inculcated, but the effect of this on the Western mind is somewhat diminished when we find that the law applies only so far as Druses are concerned, and that a considerable amount of dissimulation is permitted in dealing with outsiders, the natural result, alas, in a community who feel that their hand is against every man and every man's hand against them. The Druses have not, however, in general the fierce aversion to Christians which characterises the Mohammedans; yet it is stated by one writer that in spite of their use of mission-

ary schools and apparent sympathy with Christian tendencies, no Druse has ever yet been converted to Christianity.

The careful study of Druse history and manners shows itself everywhere in Browning's play. For instance, when in Act II. Anael in arraying herself for her nuptials puts on the khandjar, or dagger, —

> You tell me how a khandjar hangs ?
> The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
> The maiden of our class.

Churchill tells us that "Another ordinance of Hakim enjoins all his subjects, great and little, near or at a distance, to carry arms attached to their girdles." On the other hand, when Djabal says of the Prefect, —

> I discharge his weary soul
> From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
> Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
> Or sea, the reptile, or some aëry thing, —

he seems to be contradicting the belief above referred to, that Druses alone enter into animals after death. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the general character of the Druse religion and especially the prominence of the traditional and deified Hakim, in order to appreciate fully the position of Djabal, who is the central figure in the play. Nevertheless, there would seem to be no historical basis for the story, and the date left half-blank is sufficient evidence of an imaginary plot. The scene is laid on a small island of the Western Mediterranean, one of the Sporades, where a band of Druses, exiled from Lebanon by the Turks, have taken refuge. The island is under the control of the Knights Hospitallers, who figure in another English drama of quite a different character from Browning's, — 'The Knight of Malta,' by no means the poorest of the great collection of plays which goes by the name of Beaumont and Fletcher. The government of the Prefect appointed by the Hospitallers has been oppressive and

cruel to the last degree, and the Druses, driven to madness, are just on the point of revolting when the play opens.

Nearly the whole of the first act is occupied in making clear the situation, though with a good deal of bustle and vivacity. Various subordinate Druses are introduced, anxious to begin their rebellion by pillage. They are checked by Khalil, who thus has an opportunity to repeat to them and the audience what has been done for them and is to be done by Djabal, the prophet, the Messiah, the reincarnation of Hakim, who is to be their leader. Note that the same device is employed by Shakespeare, who makes Prospero in wrath chide the mutinous Ariel by recalling to him details necessary to explain the play. It is one of the many expedients invented by dramatists to avoid the dreary necessity of telling the audience what they ought to know, better at any rate than the bald prologues of Euripides or the eternal *two-gentlemen-meeting* of the lazy Fletcher. Toward the end of the act Loys arrives from Rhodes, — Loys, the friend and foil of Djabal throughout the play, the one Christian who is beloved by the Druses, whom Djabal has got rid of on that account, and who now returns, — having been appointed prefect by the Knights Hospitallers and being full of enthusiastic hopes of benefiting his Druse friends in the future. This appointment and these hopes Loys refrains from discovering: it is an important element in the action of the play, but I am not sure that it is wholly consistent with the open, boyish character of Loys, who would be more likely to proclaim it at once and toss his cap in the air.

Act II. brings us to Djabal, who is the centre-piece of the play. I shall have something to say about him in detail later on; but whether he be drawn successfully or not, the whole interest turns upon the conflict in his mind between the desire to play Hakim, to be the Messiah and Saviour of his people, and the strong impulse of honesty,

backed by the European tinge which his nature has acquired by a sojourn in France and in the family of Loys. On the stage his incessant self-dissection could not but be wearisome. Again and again he falls into the approved monologue strain. But here, as in his other plays, Browning, with immense ingenuity, contrives to relieve the tedium of long speeches by melodramatic management, which, as Arnold says of the horn in 'Hernani,' must thrill the human nerves as long as they are what they are. This combination of a lack of real, comprehensive action with skilful stage effect is so characteristic of all Browning's dramas that I must call your attention to the numerous examples of it in this play. So, just as Djabal concludes his long debate, deciding against his prophetic mission, —

> No Khalif,
> But Sheikh once more! mere Djabal — not
> [*Enter* KHALIL.]
> — God Hakeem!
> 'T is told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem.

Throughout the second act Djabal continues balancing the situation, his agony being augmented by a dialogue with Anael, sister of Khalil, and the devoted adorer of Djabal both as god and man. A debate likewise goes on in Anael's mind between these two points of view, and there is an extraordinary scene in which the two are represented, each involved in a tempest of doubt and discussing it in long asides, while the play stands still. This is broken up by the appearance of Loys, again most skilfully managed.

> *Djabal.* Loys — of mankind the only one
> Able to link my present with my past,
> . . . . .
> Thence able to unmask me, — I 've disposed
> Safely at last at Rhodes, and —
> [*Enter* KHALIL.]
> *Khalil.* Loys greets thee!

In Act III. Loys declares his love to Anael, which, of course, affords her a basis of comparison between his frank, joyous manhood and the dubious deity of Djabal. Then the Prefect reveals to Loys that his own recall and Loys' appointment were brought about at his own desire, he having squeezed the island dry and being afraid of the vengeance of the Druses, at which Loys is naturally somewhat aghast. The talk between them concludes with another piece of stage effect, when the Prefect, just going to his death, raises the arras and says, —

> This is the first time for long years I enter
> Thus without feeling just as if I lifted
> The lid up of my tomb.

You will understand that I am not finding fault with this sort of melodramatic management. A little of it is very effective, and in writers professedly picturesque and superficial like Scott, or Dumas, or Calderon, we cannot complain. But in a writer who professes to strike at once right down to the roots of human nature, we do not want our attention distracted by — shall I say pyrotechnics?

As we pass on to the next act, the same thing meets us again. Let us take it with Shakespeare full in our view. Djabal, just on the point of killing the Prefect, waits in the anteroom. It is the second act and the great crisis of 'Macbeth.'

> *Djabal.* Round me, all ye ghosts! He 'll lift —
> Which arm to push the arras wide? Or both?
> Stab from the neck down to the heart — there stay!
> Near he comes — nearer — the next footstep! Now!
> [*As he dashes aside the arras,* ANAEL *is discovered.*]

Could any nerves forbear to thrill at that? And afterwards? How does it help us the least in the world to get at Djabal's character, which is all that interests now?

Anael has killed the Prefect. Djabal, overcome, confesses his falsehood, the vanity of his pretensions. In striving to be more than man he has become less. Anael,

crushed with utter horror, flies, after reproaching him bitterly and threatening to tell the Druses. Djabal determines to persist in his mission. Loys enters at last to make his ill-fated revelation. The guards of the Nuncio, who has just arrived from Rhodes, having discovered the murder of the Prefect, arrest Djabal, and Loys, when fully convinced of his guilt, rejects him utterly.

Act V. opens impressively with a tumultuous crowd of Druses speaking the nervous and energetic prose of 'A Soul's Tragedy.' The Nuncio, with but a very small force, finds himself in a very delicate position. Finally he works on the ignorance of the people, brings Djabal before them, and urges him to prove his divinity. Djabal retains his courage and overawes them, till at length Anael is produced, veiled, as his accuser. When Djabal recognises her, overcome by his better nature, he prepares to accept his defeat; but she, with one cry of triumphant anguish, salutes him Hakeem and dies. The Druses are, of course, more than convinced, the Nuncio in despair; and Khalil makes a speech full of grovelling adoration, imploring Hakeem to restore Anael, a speech consistent enough with character and situation, but one of those revelations of the abysmal depth of human gullibility which Browning sometimes brings before us. Then, for the first time, I think, in the play, Djabal seems really to take himself momentarily for Hakeem, and upbraiding the Druses with their want of faith, charging Loys to guide and lead them, turning with a few last words of love and affection to the body of Anael, he plants the dagger in his heart.

The character of Djabal is, as I have said, the centre, the turning-point of the piece. Is he enough of an Atlas to sustain so great a weight? Apparently Browning wished to give us a study of that religious enthusiasm, not to say fanaticism, so common in the Middle Ages, and especially in the Orient, which half-educated, half intelligent, obscurely conscious at instants of its own falsehood,

yet for the most part is hurried by intense mystical feeling, by the sense of a great moral duty to perform, by the devoted sympathy of others, by the sweet titillations of vanity, to the assumption of a mission supernatural and even divine, which shall liberate and rejuvenate the world. It is a fascinating subject, but a terribly difficult one, for it is necessary to steer narrowly between despicable self-delusion on the one side and a hypocritical self-consciousness on the other. Indeed, most characters of this description fall into one pit or the other in real life, and the history of religion furnishes a thousand maniacs or impostors for one Mohammed. But, as I understand it, Browning aimed to draw a Mohammed, and it seems to me that he failed. If Djabal is not a sheer impostor, it is only because he is so terribly afraid of being one. On his very first appearance he begins to discuss the inconsistency of his position, and continues to do so till he is actually forced at the conclusion to recognise himself. He does, indeed, tell us in his first speech that he never felt hesitation or doubt in his course before, but that, though eminently convenient for the dramatist, is hopelessly inconsistent with the overwhelming fashion in which the mood takes hold of him later on. Nor is his own explanation, that his love for Anael first made him ashamed of himself, sufficient. Men of that stamp, Orientals especially, do not overset their whole career for love. Here, I suspect, is the whole root of the trouble. Djabal is not an Oriental. He is a modern Englishman placed in an anomalous situation. He is, in short — Robert Browning. When he talks about "transcendental helps," when he says, —

> I learn from Europe: all who seek
> Man's good, must awe man, by such means as these.
> We too will be divine to them — we are!

or, —

> I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
> By my Frank policy, — and with, in turn,
> My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart, —

> While these remaine in equipoise, I lived
> — Nothing; had either been predominant,
> As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
> I had been something, —

we are listening to Browning, all Browning, nothing but Browning.

But perhaps it will be said that the last passage gives the real clue to Djabal's character, and that he is not at all meant to be the fanatical enthusiast, but rather, the doubter, who perceives a great opportunity and is unable to seize it — in short, a Druse Hamlet. This is certainly borne out by his attitude all through the play; but I think it is in fact wholly inconsistent with his situation. Hamlet never acts, has never acted. Action is thrust upon him, but he is wholly passive, wholly unequal to it. Djabal has been the heart and soul of the Druse revolt, has contrived everything, arranged everything — and suddenly he is stricken with an utter paralysis and begins to analyse himself endlessly for the benefit of the audience. The inconsistency is hopeless.

Now look at Anael. She offers a strong contrast to Djabal both in her eager, feminine devotion, and in her strong, unthinking Oriental energy, which acts sooner than it speaks. This is the main outline of her character, better preserved than that of Djabal. Yet she, too, analyses herself, she, too, is harassed with doubts as to the single-hearted and religious quality of her affection for Djabal: —

> My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
> That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
> For proof of more than human attributes
> In him, by me whose heart at his approach
> Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
> Whose soul at his departure died away,
> — That every such effect might have been wrought
> In other frames, though not in mine, by Loys,
> Or any merely mortal presence.

She, too, indulges in metaphysical speculation, interesting in itself and appropriate to a young lady of the nineteenth

century, a member of the Browning Society, but singularly sophisticated in an Oriental maiden, —

> Death! — a fire curls within us
> From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
> Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
> Of flesh, perchance.

To settle her doubts and speculations she takes the best (shall I say the most feminine way?) to settle all doubts in this uncertain world, — action. She anticipates the wretched Djabal in killing the Prefect. Then red-hot from this murder, shaken in nerve and brain, she is met by Djabal's confession of his own hypocrisy. She refuses to believe him: it is a hallucination, "the bloody business that interprets," until she can doubt no longer. Rushing from him, she refuses to have any part in the miserable cheat. Her only words when she appears in the final scene to confront her former idol are first, *Djabal*, uttering her love to him as man, and then a final cry, in which wells out the whole passion of her nature, *Hakeem*. It is not indicated to us — nor is there any reason why it should be — what was Anael's motive in saluting him thus; it is natural to infer that she was not clear herself as to whether the full splendour of his divinity beamed upon her in that supreme moment with no uncertain radiance, or whether she was simply anxious to justify him, to secure his honour and success at the expense of her own veracity. Either explanation would probably have been regarded by Browning as thoroughly feminine, if we may judge from many instances that he has given us of woman's devotion. In Anael, then, as in Djabal, though in a less degree, there is a very strong mixture of the nineteenth century; and if you wish to feel this fully, I should advise reading Pierre Loti's 'Roman d'un Spahi,' where you will find the character of an Oriental woman portrayed in a very different fashion.

Of the other characters in this play Loys is the most important, and forms in every respect a contrast to Djabal. Frank, joyous, and boyish, gentle and generous, the discovery of Djabal's deceit is to him as repulsive and disgusting as to Anael. The naïveté of the young knight is perhaps excessive, as is usual with Browning's heroes, who seem to have walked through the world with their eyes upwards, sublimely unconscious of the numerous pitfalls it contains, and too frequently tumbling into them.

The Prefect and the Nuncio, less prominent in the action, are more accurate and satisfactory than the other three characters. They belong, with not very great differences, to the class of men whom Browning has perhaps most powerfully depicted, the Blougrams more or less modified, the men who take life and its conditions as they come, who aim not to be moral, but to be decent on the outside and conform to the conventional. How excellent is the Prefect stunning Loys by his infamous self-revelation!

In order that we may complete our examination of 'The Return of the Druses,' I will ask you to look for a few minutes at the style. Browning is not, I think, sufficiently studied from this point of view. Those who admire him are so engaged with the purely moral and psychological side of his work, that they hardly care to pay great attention to details of execution and of workmanship. Yet surely it is true of Browning, as of every other poet and writer, that all his qualities of mind and thought are intimately bound up in his manner of expression. This is no less universally true of men of action and of scientists than of men like Flaubert, whose whole life is spent in the polishing of a few sentences. Do we not find the swift decision and the practical energy of Grant reflected in his quick, strong language, and the unfailing sincerity and patience of Darwin in the openness and perfect simplicity of his books?

Metrically Browning shows in the play we are consider-

ing the same skill and resource as distinguish him always. He is sometimes accused of harshness and roughness of metrical expression; nor has he — he does not care to have — the liquid sweetness of 'The Idyls of the King;' but one should bear in mind the intolerable monotony which blank verse takes on in the hands of one who cannot control it, to appreciate the endless variety without any feeling of effort of which Browning is master. His dialogue has the ease of conversation, equally remote from the heaviness of Marlowe and the jerkiness of Massinger. Without falling into the tricks which disfigure the verse of Fletcher, he has caught much of that incomparable rhetorical effect, in which Fletcher is the easy though unappreciated leader among our dramatic writers. Note the magnificent emphasis on the final *him* in this passage, where the verse swells and falls like the sea it expresses: —

> This dim secluded house where the sea beats
> Is heaven to me — my people's huts are hell
> To them; this august form will follow me,
> Mix with the waves his voice will, — I have *him*:

and here is one in another tone, where the bold welding of the two lines by the double-ending participle has a magical effect: —

> And see yon eight-point cross of white flame winking
> Hoar silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone.

Again, here is a line unscannable, and just by that very thing immensely effective in its place, —

> I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee.

But the style in the narrower sense, the diction of the play, is curiously inferior to the verse; and it is on account of this contrast that I wish to call your attention to it somewhat in detail. We have here and there exquisite single lines, —

> He 'd tell by the hour
> With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow
> Plausiblest stories.

> Where 's your tall bewitcher
> With that small, Arab, thin-lipped silver mouth ?
>
> They pass and they repass with pallid eyes.

And there are fine and striking passages. Perhaps the most striking in itself is that at the beginning, from which I quoted above. There are others, like the concluding speech of Djabal, which have immense dramatic effect; but even that speech, taken in detail, is rather weak than strong. And so with almost all the longer passages: they fail in themselves to seize you, to carry you away; they are marred and blurred by defects of expression. In the first place there is an astonishing amount of what is sensational, of what Arnold calls "Surrey melodrama," meaning, I suppose, something like his own inconceivable "tyrannous tempests of bale." I have picked out a few samples from many. Loys' —

> Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place.
>
> On, Druses, be there found
> Blood and a heap behind us, —

Khalil's anti-climax,

> Break
> One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
> Die at your fault.

After withering in one's blood, whatever that may mean, mere dying seems a little pale.

But occasional slips in this direction are not all. One can find them in Victor Hugo, a master of words. One can find them in Shakespeare. What is more serious is the lack of grasp on language as a whole, thinness, paleness, bloodlessness.

> Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow,
> Conspicuous in his gay attire.

It is feeble.

> How lone a lot, though brilliant, I embrace.

And Djabal's great speech at the climax, which I have already placed beside Macbeth's —

> Round me, all ye ghosts! He 'll lift —
> Which arm to push the arras wide? — Or both?
> Stab from the neck down to the heart — there stay!

But why should n't it stay there; where should it go? When every word of Shakespeare is crowded and overflowing with force, Browning's words seem almost superfluous. And still more trying than this weakness and mere lack of color, is the introduction of a word or phrase positively jarring and discordant. Perhaps Djabal's "transcendental helps" is rather dramatically than literarily improper, but what shall we say of, —

> No majesty of all that rapt regard, —

or, —

> and yet have no one
> Great heart's word that will tell her, —

or, —

> In that enforced, still fashion, word on word, —

or, —

> Whose brain, while he was by, swam round, —

or, —

> That banner of a brow, —

or lastly Anael's preposterous,

> And obstacles did sink
> And furtherances rose?

Some of these might almost be called Browningisms, —

> No majesty of all that rapt regard.
>
> And yet have no one
> Great heart's word that will tell her,

and may not appear so objectionable to others as to me. I know many will regard them as of no importance one way or the other. But I think that, occurring as frequently as they do, they suggest very interesting generalisations as to literary characteristics that are much more important. Before leaving the subject I wish to call attention to one short passage. I shall make no comment on it, but simply commend it as a subject for study, containing, as I think

it does, in a brief space many of the excellences and defects of Browning's style. It is the passage in which Anael addresses Djabal after discovering his deceit: —

> Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal. Crouch!
> Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
> The pile of thee I reared up to the cloud —
> Full, midway of our Fathers' trophied tombs,
> Based on the living rock, devoured not by
> The unstable desert's jaws of sand, — falls prone,
> Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
> A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through.'

Almost every word of that passage might be analysed with profit.

Hitherto I have confined myself to 'The Return of the Druses,' the work of Browning which I was requested to discuss; but the observations I have made may, I think, be readily extended to all his other plays. If we leave aside 'Paracelsus' and 'Pippa Passes,' which are hardly plays in the technical sense, they all — 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' 'Colombe's Birthday,' 'King Victor and King Charles,' 'Luria' — turn in the main upon some moral debate, some knot of difficulty in the principal character, which makes that character the real central point of interest, and which also involves long monologues, to the great detriment of the movement of the piece. But — and here is the noticeable point — any tediousness which might result from this is relieved by such admirable touches of theatrical effect as we have seen all through 'The Return of the Druses.' Opinions may differ as to the legitimateness of these effects, as to their literary value, but I would recommend to your attention the remarks of Mr. Sharp on 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' which I should be inclined to extend to Browning's other dramas. You will find it stated by Mr. Sharp that Dickens declared that he knew no love like that of Mildred and Mertoun, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception like it, and that the author of 'David Copperfield' affirmed

that he would rather have written this play than any work of modern times. Dickens was a most facile, versatile, and ingenious writer; but to be thus praised from his standpoint seems to me one of the hardest pieces of Browning's fate.

As to the characters on whom this dramatic edifice is reared, they strike me as in general, like Djabal, interesting suggestions, conceptions, but not equal in finish or force to sustain the burden that is laid upon them. Let pass Mildred and Mertoun; but are Colombe and Valence much better? Are they struck and stamped down into the solid flesh of human nature? Is not Valence just a little — *niais*, as the French say? In the crisis of his feeling, he too is pale, like Djabal: —

> The heavens and earth stay as they were; my heart
> Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.
> What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
> Was it my faith, that she could estimate
> Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,
> Dare I now test her? — or grew faith so strong
> Solely because the power of test was mine?

And Charles and Victor? D'Ormea especially is but a weak reflection of the Richelieus and the Bismarcks, or the Machiavellis, whom Browning apparently sought to depict. Domizia is one of the most vigorous sketches in any of the plays; but Luria is, after all, a stage Moor. Put him beside Othello, whose savage nature shows in the quick sweep of his unreflecting passions, not in sentimental reflections like these: —

> Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
> The boundless unrest of the savage heart!
> The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
> Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;
> Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile:
> Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
> In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
> 'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.

The truth is — strangely enough — that Browning's plays, with all their brilliancy and versatility, do not give us characters that take possession of us and dwell with us, as do the characters, not of Shakespeare only, but of Beaumont or Massinger, of Sterne or Fielding, of Scott or Thackeray. Of all the glories of English literature this is the greatest, from Chaucer to Meredith, the endless fertility in the creation of living men and women; yet Browning, with all his command of human nature, has, in his purely dramatic works, increased this multitude but very little.

Nor should I hesitate to generalise what I have said on 'The Return of the Druses' in regard to style. Everywhere through Browning's plays we find passages of dramatic effectiveness; much less often, I think, passages of flawless and satisfying beauty, such as the bewitching line, —

> Like a late moon, of use to nobody.

On the other hand we do find frequently an infelicity of language, that tendency to mar fine situations by insipid or inadequate expression, on which I have already dwelt at large. The bit in 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' which drew Mr. Sharp's criticism is an example among many. Mildred forgives Thorold thus: —

> You 've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
> What is it I must pardon? This and all?
> Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.
> Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

In all the plays, as in 'The Return of the Druses,' the command of rhythm is noticeable and the metre varied with infinite ingenuity and skill.

Browning's plays form but a small part of his poetical work, and of the rest I am neither called upon nor competent to speak in detail. I should like, however, to touch, in closing, upon a few points. In the first place I think it important to observe how much Browning was master of the art of dramatic construction and management, which I

have already alluded to. 'The Ring and the Book' may perhaps be regarded constructively as a *tour de force*, and most readers probably weary at the repetition of the story, in spite of the study of human nature. Yet this danger is avoided with extraordinary skill, those points which are dwelt on at length in one narrative being touched lightly in another, while new ones are developed instead; and in the hands of any ordinary writer the book would have gained as much in tediousness as it would have lost in penetrative insight; though I venture to observe that the method of proceeding was discovered long, long before Browning. In the 'Clarissa Harlowe' of Richardson we have the same alternate display of different points of view without the danger of repetition. But in his later long poems Browning's skill in construction appears fully, — 'The Red Cotton Night Cap Country,' 'The Inn Album.'

Again, the metrical excellence of Browning's work as a whole is even more admirable than that of his plays. To say that he has not the lyrical grace of Tennyson or Swinburne would be beside the mark: he had no need of it. But for variety, for endless fertility of rhythmical resource in English metre, not even Swinburne can approach him. Take, for instance, the Alexandrine of 'Fifine at the Fair,' a measure never used before but once for a long poem by any English poet; and compare the variety and ease of Browning, his masterly use of the cæsura, with the sturdy monotony of Drayton's 'Polyolbion;' and the dancing, lilting rhythm of 'The Flight of the Duchess,' scintillating with rhyme more ingenious than that of even Butler, or Swift, or Byron, is just as perfect in a very different kind.

On the other hand, what I have said of Browning's style in the plays would hardly hold for general application. In his later work the inadequacy largely fades away, and gives place often to a broad, firm touch, though sometimes to what seems like wilful confusion.

We are left with the question of character, and on that I

shall not venture. The monologue of Browning, though not particularly new (for how does it differ from the soliloquy, which has been a staple in the dramatic and story-writing market since literature began?), received at his hands so novel, so elaborate a treatment, covers such a variety of subjects, that it seems almost like the creation of a new poetical world. Who can resist 'Fra Lippo,' or 'Blougram,' or 'The Death in the Desert,' or a host of others? Yet one feels just a little doubt about the method.

I had the pleasure of being present at one of your meetings in the earlier part of the season, when a paper was read, which pleased me very much, dealing, however, more with the moral than with the literary side of Browning's work. I was especially interested in the discussion that came afterwards. Something in the weather or the conditions seemed to set every one apologising for Browning and insisting on his exclusive preoccupation with ethical rather than with æsthetic questions. And I remember your President said that Browning was, to be sure, ethical, but that this was an ethical age, and why should not he be ethical in his way as others in theirs?

Now this is a delightful point, for the whole question is about the way. This is an ethical age, a scientific, critical, psychological age; and most readers, wishing to get at the intellectual kernel of things, reject a poetic, artistic, imaginative husk, which hampers and obscures their vision. The superficial philosophy of the Augustan Age and the eighteenth century could afford to dress itself in the graceful turns of Horace, and Addison, and Pope. The fashionable youth rolled it under his tongue like a choice morsel, went his way, and forgot what manner of man he was. But to-day people are intensely in earnest and terribly hurried; they are almost universally impatient of poetical expression even for the very metre. Browning's one great interest and object is said to have been the study of the human soul. Well, I will tell you where you can find

this carried out after the fashion of the nineteenth century, without poetical ornament, simply, psychologically: in the 'Lundis' of Sainte-Beuve. Sainte-Beuve, too, was, above all things, interested in the human soul. "I botanise," he said, "I am a naturalist of souls." He, too, wrote monologues after his fashion; for he constructed his articles largely of skilfully arranged quotations from books and letters of the characters he studied. The true difference between Browning and Sainte-Beuve lies in this: Sainte-Beuve was actuated by scientific curiosity; good and bad were often no more than names to him; what he cared for was the endless play and variety of human nature. Browning was pre-eminently moral, always moral; all mankind are, for him, sharply divided into good and bad, and he shudders with fascinated horror at the wicked.

It is, then, precisely the way in which Browning gives us his ethical study that is doubtful. Can critical, scientific thinking ever embody itself successfully in poetry? But, at the same time, the supreme greatness of Browning lies in this very thing. The genius of his time split itself into two great branches: one confining itself to hard, cold, clear intellectual research, to plain prose, the other shutting itself off in a musical, imaginative world, the *Parnassus* of the French poets, a literary *ivory tower*, as Flaubert expresses it, out of the hurry and bustle of steam and railroads and evolution and socialism and the dust and dirt of common human life. Browning alone threw himself manfully into the gap, proclaiming that poetry, the best birthright of man, should not succumb, and be lost; that it should be now, as formerly, the medium of all that was best and most profoundly important in human life. It is for this effort and this determination, gospel one may almost call it, that he holds a place apart from other poets, and is the most striking poetical phenomenon of this closing nineteenth century.

'MR. SLUDGE, THE MEDIUM.'

By FRANCIS B. HORNBROOKE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Dec. 18, 1894.]

Before writing 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' Browning had given his readers, in 'Caliban upon Setebos' and in 'Bishop Blougram's Apology,' similar studies of the philosophy of life, as based upon certain phases of condition and character. These poems are not to be regarded as attacks upon any system of religious thought, but rather as attempts to disclose the way in which some theories of things originate and develop.

No Roman Catholic, for example, will blame our poet, or think it necessary to answer him, on account of Bishop Blougram. For he is not set forth as an exemplar of his faith, but only as an illustration of the way in which some natures might seek to justify their relation to it, and their acceptance of it. Every Roman Catholic is not a Bishop Blougram, any more than every Roman Catholic is the Pope of 'The Ring and the Book.' The man, and not the faith he professes, is the real object of the poet's consideration. A true faith may be held in an untrue way, or may be maintained by dishonest methods, or based upon unworthy motives. A great religion may be so apprehended and applied as to make it seem mean and trivial, and, on the other hand, a poor religion may be ennobled and magnified by the use to which an earnest and sincere nature puts it. To depict a character who holds certain opinions is not necessarily either to condemn those opinions

or to approve them; it is merely to estimate the influence of the personal factor upon them. For this reason, it would be a mistake to regard 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' as merely an attack upon spiritism, or as an expression of the poet's dislike of it. As a man, indeed, there can be no doubt as to what Browning thought of it. Anybody who cares to know, can easily learn that he hated it, and had no patience with his wife's hankering after it. Whether in this he was right or wrong it is not necessary for us to decide. To the students of Browning's poetry it is indeed a matter of no special importance. They are concerned with what he has done or tried to do in his poem, not with his individual sympathies or antipathies.

Viewed in this way, 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' is no more an assault upon spiritism than 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' is an argument against Roman Catholicism. It contains neither praise nor dispraise of the belief in spiritual communications, but is to be read as a careful study of an unworthy representative of that belief. The most that can be said of the poem from the standpoint of the spiritist is that the opinion is implied in it that the belief in spiritism is responsible for the nurture and growth of Sludges. But what of that? Every belief, like every man, has the defect of its qualities. We may, so far as the consideration of the poem is concerned, leave out all discussion of the merits or demerits of spiritism, and concentrate our attention upon Mr. Sludge. He is big enough to fill our vision and occupy our thoughts for a while.

Nor ought we to blame Browning too severely because this study of Sludge has not the poetic merit of 'Caliban upon Setebos' or of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology.' We do indeed have a right to think it would have been better if he had not attempted Sludge as a poetic subject. We cannot imagine Tennyson doing so, or even thinking of doing so, for a single moment. But Tennyson is not law for Browning, any more than Browning is law for

Tennyson. At any rate, Browning has seen fit to select Sludge for his use, and has done his "human best" with him, and has, perhaps, succeeded almost as well with him as some of his critics might have done. To have made him as poetic as Caliban or Bishop Blougram, was manifestly impossible. The material of Sludge was incapable of being fashioned in the same way. Caliban is picturesque in his monstrosity, and, like a pug-dog, seems beautiful almost by reason of his surpassing ugliness. Bishop Blougram belongs to an historic church, rich in grand traditions, impressive by reason of sacred and beautiful associations. He himself is endowed with an imposing personality. He is affable, courteous, learned, and subtle. In any conflict of wits he is not likely to come out second best. Much as he says, we cannot help feeling that he could say a great deal more. Both these characters, then, are capable of poetic treatment. But poor Sludge is of another and very different order.

To begin with, he appears before us in a most humiliating position. He is in a state of pitiable contrition; not only has he cheated, but what is still worse, for him, he has been caught. He protests that it is the first time, and that it would not have happened then if he had not mistaken the champagne for Catawba, or if some spiteful spirit had not led him astray. His patron, it is easy to see from the indications in the poem, is terribly angry. Although Sludge pleads by the memory of the sainted mother, he has no mercy. Despite all his grovelling, Sludge finds him implacable. Then Sludge shows another side of his nature. He grows ugly, and, like a rat at bay, he turns and tries to bite, —

> Go tell then, who the devil cares
> What such a rowdy chooses to —

But his strength is not equal to his spite. He is helpless in the firm grip of Hiram H. Horsefall — what a mouthful for the poetic muse! — and his abusive outpouring is

stopped by fingers that seem to pierce his windpipe. Most assuredly Sludge's first appearance does not win him any favour. He is neither dignified nor impressive. And the portraiture of him throughout the poem shows him to be a most despicable personage. He is ready to bully, to swagger, and to fight with any lie he can devise. He will betray even the cause he professes to serve, if only Horsefall will let him go with the presents and the "V-notes."

Then, too, how ignorant he is! He does not know the difference between person and Porson. He spells Bacon with a "y" and a "k," and places him in the times of Oliver Cromwell. He thinks Herodotus wrote his works in Latin, — so they were not all Greek to him. Of course, ignorance is not a sin. Many a good man does not know any more about historical personages than Sludge. Only the other day I heard of a most excellent man who asked the keeper of the house of John Knox, through which he was being shown, where that eminent divine was preaching now. But a man who is a knave and also an ignoramus is like a bitter pill without the sugar-coating, — harder to swallow.

Then, according to his own confession, Sludge is a coward. He is unable to tell the truth. He craves notoriety, and loves flashy clothing and big dinners. He regrets all this, but he does not seem to find any means of deliverance from it, — in fact, he does not seem to have agonised much to do so. Nor is there any sense of gratitude in the man, unless with the cynic we define it as an expectation of favours to come. He is always asking, "How much can I get out" of people? He crouches like a whipped spaniel at Horsefall's feet, and kisses, or tries to kiss, his hand with thankfulness; and then the moment he is out of sight he shakes his fist at him, and begins to devise malicious lies about him, and to call him a brute. To his face he calls Horsefall's mother a saint; behind his back he calls her a hag. He takes money from the man

he hates. He whimpers and whines, but does not repent. His tears are often in his voice, but never in his heart. In short, Sludge lives before us an unwholesome, slimy creature, who crouches and fawns, and then turns and rends the hand that feeds him. Is it any wonder that Browning did not make him more poetical?

Sludge is indeed a poor specimen of human flesh, — one of the very smallest of God's mercies. He has none of the qualities which sometimes render a rascal lovable. He is neither strong nor beautiful. Smarter than Caliban, he lacks his honesty. No more worldly than Bishop Blougram, he has none of his ability. And yet he is not altogether unworthy our study or the pains which a great psychological poet has taken with him. Even poor Sludge has some value for us. We are learning in these days that nothing exists too humble or too mean for the consideration of man. What God allows to be, must be well for us to know. If the naturalist devotes years to the ear of a mouse, why should we be unwilling to give a few hours to the study of the whole of even a poor sort of man? Why study a bug, and refuse to study a humbug? And if the psychologist investigates the abnormal and diseased, in the hope that he may thus attain to clearer insight into the normal and sound, may not we also realise more vividly what truth and honesty are by tracing the sinuous career of a perverse nature like Sludge's?

We need not like Sludge, nor admire him; but we ought to understand him, because he too is part of the whole to which we ourselves belong. But it may be said: "This is true so far as the studies of naturalist, physiologist, or psychologist are concerned; but poetry contemplates something quite different. The poet's time and art ought to be occupied with something better than the portrayal of the unpleasing and detestable. Poetry should not be sacrificed to any such endeavour. In fact, there is no chance here for poetry at all." Well, if one makes a

definition of what poetry ought to be, and with what it ought to concern itself, it will be easy enough for him to pronounce judgment. The only trouble is that somehow or other the works of the poets themselves compel constant revision of all our definitions. Critics have been constructing them age after age, and changing them to suit new conditions. Not seldom the poet has compelled the critic to enlarge and modify his rules of poetry. New conditions and other minds create new standards. The poetry of to-day has always seemed defective, — indeed, hardly poetry at all to those whose rules are derived from the usages of yesterday. "This will never do," said Jeffreys of the poetry of Wordsworth; but it has done. "This will not do," the critic may say of 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium;' but it is probable that the poem will be included in the conception of poetry which is steadily gaining ground in our day, and which the poem itself may be a factor in forming. Whether, then, 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' is good poetry or not must depend upon the definition of poetry which will finally be approved, or upon the taste which tends to produce that definition.

It is useless to discuss the question whether this work is good poetry or not. Time alone can fully decide that. For myself, I am willing to confess that there is much that is unpleasing to me in the poem. Its sentences are often abrupt and unfinished, and its structure is rude. After having read 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' many times, I cannot recall a really great line or a passage which a reader might select for recitation. It will not bear comparison with much that Browning has written. No one would claim that, if this were his only poem, it would give him a high place among our great English poets. It is doubtful whether it has the quality of permanent interest. But, for all that, the poem has a strange fascination for me, which repeated readings only deepen. Others may not be able to see why I should care for it;

but that may be not so much my fault as their misfortune. That some people cannot enjoy what I do, does not in the least degree concern me. I am under no obligation, in such matters, to justify my likes or dislikes, and I am sure I could not do it if I tried.

Suppose we grant the absence of poetic charm, does not the dramatic interest make large compensation? Sludge certainly lives before us in the poem. We know him; indeed, we can see him. He is not agreeable, but he is palpable; he is no abstraction, but a creature endowed with reality. Even his companion, Hiram H. Horsefall, though he never speaks a word in the whole course of the poem, makes a vivid impression upon the reader. Surely a work so full of dramatic life as 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium,' ought not to be lightly passed over.

And now for the thought of the poem: its main object is to unfold Sludge's philosophy of life; it is not Browning's philosophy, but simply his statement in explicit form of the philosophy implied in Sludge's constitution and character. Perhaps this might have been taken for granted were it not for the fact that students of Browning sometimes make him responsible for all the opinions of his characters, and condemn him for teaching a view of things which he has only sought to describe.

Sludge's philosophy is based upon the common belief that there is another life after this, —

> . . . there 's a world beside this world,
> With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
> That much within that world once sojourned here,
> That all upon this world will visit there,
> And therefore that we, bodily here below,
> Must have exactly such an interest
> In learning what may be the ways o' the world
> Above us, as the disembodied folk
> Have (by all analogic likelihood)
> In watching how things go in the old home
> With us, their sons, successors, and what not.

Spirits are reported to have appeared to people in the past. If so, then why not now as well as in Bible times? If Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul, one's brother may appear to him (Sludge) to-day. In this way he seeks to establish the historic relations of his faith in the revelations of the spirits who have departed to those who still remain. He professes, it will be seen, no unusual faith, but one which has been more or less held from time immemorial. The good people about him profess to believe that such communications were once actual: why should they not be so here and now? Perhaps the presence of those who have gone before may not be manifested in the same way. Different times and circumstances may call for different methods. These revelations, whatever they may have once required, now demand the peculiar man, with the adequate endowment. In our day we need the medium,— "the seer of the supernatural;" and Sludge is just the man for his day. So far — allowing the validity of his premises, as the majority of people do — Sludge occupies logically impregnable ground. What has happened once may happen again; and it is, to say the least, not unreasonable to suppose that, if we inhabit a spiritual universe, and if in that universe the spirits of the departed are ever around us, there may be those who are fitted by their organisation to hold intercourse with them. So far Sludge deserves no censure. It may well be that here we have one who is only more sincere and consistent in his application of the prevailing faith than those about him; one, too, who honestly believes that in the peculiarity of his nature he has a divine indication of the service he is to render. The defect in Sludge is not in his belief, strange and improbable as it may appear to many, but in the attitude in which he stands toward that belief. He is not to blame for his faith in the manifestation of the spirits of the dead to the living, or even in his conviction of his special function to mediate between the two, to see what

others could not see. That faith, for all we know, might be perfectly true, and it is one in which myriads of the best men and women have lived and died. He might easily be mistaken as to the nature and scope of his capacity; but very good people, who have done service for which the world is grateful, have been equally mistaken. The real fault of Sludge is that he makes this faith of his subservient to his selfish individual interests. He attempts to read life without reference to any sense of righteousness. He sees everything, not in the clear light of the law of right, but in the confusing light of his personal wants and wishes. Caliban viewed life from the standpoint of a nature that loved physical pleasure. Bishop Blougram read it from the standpoint of a man who relished the comfortable and convenient. But Sludge views all things with an eye single to his own profit. In his philosophy the universe revolves about himself, and is designed to secure him what he wants. So he cries, —

> What do I know or care about your world
> Which either is or seems to be? This snap
> O' my fingers, sir! My care is for myself;
> Myself am whole and sole reality
> Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
> Gathered about it: that 's the use of things.

Never has the idealism of selfishness been reduced to lower terms. The world, the sun, the moon, and stars revolve — for Sludge! They were there, perhaps, for other incidental purposes, but in the main to serve him. Nothing is too great to indicate his smallest action, —

> If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
> It warns me, "Go nor lose another day,
> And have your hair cut, Sludge!"

Nothing is too trivial to contain its direction for his guidance. What is required of him is to study the signs. He must always be on the look-out with those smart eyes of his to find "the influences at work to profit Sludge."

Providence works for him not merely in the movement of a planet, but in the boiling of a tea-kettle, in the flight of pigeons, in the dime that sticks in his pocket with a hole in it. God is behind the smallest objects: therefore he thinks himself "the one i' the world, the one for whom the world was made." Out of this view of things comes his view of religion, —

> Religion 's all or nothing; it 's no mere smile
> O' contentment; sigh of aspiration, sir —
> No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
> Like its whiteness, or its lightness; rather, stuff
> O' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self.

To that we may assent, — and do, in some sense of our own. Viewed in that way, the lines are true, and even attractive. But when we interpret them, as we must, from the Sludgian standpoint, all the charm dies out of them, and we see that in that conception of it religion is only an eager and constant search among the objects of existence for what will help one to get on. Regarded in that way, Sludge is right when he declares that he is more religious than Horsefall. If religion consists in looking everywhere and all the time for what may be to one's advantage, he cannot be accused of unfaithfulness to his ideal. If that is religion, then Sludge deserves a place in the calendar of the saints.

But in looking about him so carefully and so microscopically for the signs and omens to guide him, it is remarkable that he never once asks whether these will lead him into the knowledge of what is right, or enable him to do it. There is no consciousness on his part of any need of moral direction or strengthening. Everything is to teach him how to succeed in his dubious plans; but nothing seems ordained to help him to tell the truth or to behave like an honest man. What a strange theodicy is that in which a planet floats in space to warn a man to cut his hair, but in which nothing even hints that the

universe is straight, and that a crooked man can by no means be fitted into it! The only key Sludge has to open the way to the secrets of the universe is his smartness. He never looks within to ask whether he ought to cheat, but he puts apple-pips in his eyes, and lets the chance of which one sticks or falls decide whether he will cheat or not the next man he meets.

Sludge claims that he fulfils a necessary mission in the world. He brings together the scattered facts which his peculiar endowment enables him to perceive, and so makes the miraculous the commonplace. But granted that his claim is a just one, he does not even hint that it will provide any help for righteous living. He emphasises only the advantage to which it entitles Sludge.

Sometimes, however, it happens that the facts are not sufficient, — more are needed to satisfactorily demonstrate the fact of immortality. What shall be done when these are lacking? A truthful nature would say, "Wait until we have them." Not so Sludge: he never thinks of truth, but always of the comfort which an assured belief in immortality will give. By all means make everybody happy. That will help people over the hard places, and make them think they are walking on solid ground, — which is just the same as if one were walking on it. A tissue of lies can help the traveller over dizzy heights as well as one built on the granite of fact. Truth needs a lie to leaven it, to make it go.

> Put a chalk-egg beneath a clucking hen,
> She 'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
> Daily for weeks to come . . .
> . . . Every cheat 's inspired, and every lie
> Quick with a germ of truth.

Sludge at last concludes that he is a public blessing. Life seems so flat and meaningless! Opportunity comes when we cannot use it; and when we are able to do so, then the opportunity is gone. We are strong when we

are not wise, and wise when we are not strong. What is our knowledge of the life to come? Often, at the best, that we know nothing. Then comes Sludge, and, with good help of a little lying, —

> You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
> Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
> Each folly fooled.

Why hesitate to lie, then, when men may so easily be made sure of what they wish to believe? Then all the sceptics are liars: why not defeat them by lying on your own side, and so make the truth stronger against them? And then, too, he is not the only liar. In this world of falsehood there is nothing for it but to lie in sheer self-defence. He claims that he is no more of a liar than the poets and the historians, who are praised for their imaginative genius. They lie to be interesting; he for the comfort of others and his own profit. That is all the difference he thinks there is between them.

We all know what to say to such a conscienceless plea as this. We know Sludge is wrong, all wrong, and that his philosophy is only a theory to justify his practice. It is only the apology of one who hopes to get along by his smartness and by keeping his eyes wide open for all signs of personal profit. But, for all that, it is an effective argument against all those who think the events of life are ordained for the special purpose of serving their individual good. It is indeed a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of special providence. And Sludge is bright enough to see that, and he urges it with all the force that is in him. He reminds Horsefall how on one occasion, having missed his handkerchief, he returned for it, and so missed the train which carried thirty-three "whom God forgot" to death. That insignificant event Horsefall regarded as a special interference for his welfare, or for what he supposed to be such. But, urges Sludge, if that be so for

you, why should it not be so for me? If Providence revealed itself in the missing handkerchief, why not for me in the sale of my dog, which went mad the next week? Am I of any less importance than you, Hiram H. Horsefall, if you are rich and live in a big house? It may seem to make little difference to you whether I succeed or fail, live or die, and so to you it is; but please remember that "Sludge is of all importance to himself." As against Horsefall, Sludge is right; and it must be allowed that he, at least, has no logical objection to interpose. Just here the speech of Sludge assumes a triumphant tone. He evidently realizes that he has met his opponent on his own ground, and come off victorious, —

> Oh, you wince at this?
> You 'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
> Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
> O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump?
> With Sludge it 's too absurd? *Fine, draw the line*
> *Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine!*

Nor is Sludge's theory of the value of deception, bad as it is, anything new or unusual. In fact, if he had only known it, he might have cited ancient and honourable authority for his position on this matter, and have found in much present theory and more present practice ample warrant for his course. Plato taught that it was right to lie for the State, and Clement that it was right to lie for the Church. Why, then, should not Sludge lie in behalf of man's faith in immortality? Of the three motives, his is the noblest. Again, when St. Chrysostom preaches endless punishment, not because he thoroughly believes it, but because he thinks the people of Constantinople need it, he is only a more eloquent Sludge. So, too, when we suppress some fact in the interest of our religious or scientific theory, or when we are afraid the truth will injure our system of theology, or when we imagine that some deception may serve to enshrine the reality, or make it more

impressive, or render it more comforting, I do not see what right we have to throw stones at Sludge, — we are in glass houses as well as he.

The real answer to Sludge is that we are in a true universe, and we ourselves must be true if we would learn its secrets. We are also in a universe which includes us all, great or small, in its wisdom and love, — and which does, no doubt, reveal its meaning in the birth of a rose as in the rush of a planet, in a Pompilia as well as in the Pope; but no man need hope to comprehend that meaning unless he is conscious of a purpose to tell the truth, and to do what is right. To the soul devoid of a moral aim the universe is a planless maze, — a confused assemblage of things and events whose purport can only be guessed, in the vague hope that sometimes its guesses may perchance be correct. The man who cares only for what is pleasant, but who has no sense of loyalty to truth, soon discovers that he belongs not to a cosmos, but a chaos. He is all adrift, and he always will be so long as his philosophy is only the expression of the thoughts and motives of his lower self.

Such a man need not hope to convince the world of the actuality of that life in which it already has faith: for a true man is better proof of immortality than any number of "manifestations." We may doubt and explain away the latter; we cannot do so with the former. We are not so sure that any phenomenon of spiritism is genuine, and proves what it claims to prove, as we are that our faith in immortality must somehow find itself realised in a universe that wakens it. The Sludges would make another world as real, and as common too, as this, by giving demonstrative proof of its existence. But may not our ignorance be providential? May it not be that, while we have enough of faith in the future life to enlarge our vision of human possibilities, we have not enough to prevent us from putting our best into the life that now is?

Like most of us, Sludge never seems to suspect that his

own aims and motives are wrong, but lays the blame on others. His is the old cry, "I might not have become what I am if others had not urged me on." He cries, "It 's all your fault, — you curious gentlefolk!" When he had thought he had seen a ghost, it was they who had encouraged him. They had incited him, and had suggested what they would like him to see and to do. He had only responded to their desire to witness still further development of his powers as a medium. His patron coveted the glory of "ferreting out a medium;" and he had only tried to provide him with what he longed for. If any one thought he was a cheat, he was put down in this rough-shod manner: "You see a cheat? Here 's some twelve see an ass." Everybody about him, so Sludge urges, explained away his mistakes and excused his faults. When he commits gross blunders, they are at once imputed to the disturbing presence of doubters who "puddled his pure mind." Then those who had no real belief in anything, and who in consequence were able to play safely with superstition, called aloud for fair play, and so gave him greater currency. Everything conspired to induce him to become what he did. The literary man used him for artistic purposes, while others found in him and his doings a topic for conversation somewhat more interesting than the weather. Sludge's account of the various causes which had formed him is acute and valuable, and we may well suppose it to be true. Supply and demand usually correspond. What people are anxious to have, they are pretty apt to find. The endeavour to learn what lies beyond the veil must always make Sludges possible. But what of it? After all, Sludge is none the less blameworthy. He chose to live only for Sludge, — for the materialistic Sludge, with his inordinate love of showy clothes and big dinners and notoriety; and, to get these, he yields to the social pressure of which he now complains. But, at the worst, society was responsible, not for his creation, but only for his nurture.

It can only develop what is already in a man. And he who cares more for his momentary interests and the gratification of his surface desires than he does for the true and the right will always yield to its seductive solicitations. He must not blame these, but himself. The only deliverance from the forces that tend to lead the soul astray is the love of truth.

We may well inquire whether Sludge really believes in his own defence. It might well seem that he could not. It overlooks such obvious facts, and is so full of inconsistent ideas. But human nature is a "mighty deep." The prophet and cheat may be rolled in one. Sometimes we can discern in the same face the most contradictory qualities. Not seldom do we find in one peculiar personality the insight of the seer and the outlook of the fraud. Probably Sludge did somehow believe in himself; for the deceiver is deceived. The liar learns to believe his own stories, and the cheater is often worse cheated than any one else. But the sad fact faces us that in Sludge the better side did not win the day. The moral sense was not strong enough to unfold the higher side of the man, of which we seem now and then to catch fitful glimpses. All his fine theories, and even all his gratitude, so profuse in its expression, evaporate in the heat of a hate made more intense by the consciousness of discomfiture and financial loss. And so the last we see or hear of him is not the possible man of Browning — not Sludge as God in His loving purpose meant him to become, but the superficial Sludge in the baleful glare of his moral putrescence. He has left his old patron, with his money in his hands and the words, "Bl-l-less you, sir!" on his lips. But now he is alone, and this is what he says, —

> R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard! Cowardly scamp!
> I only wish I dared burn down the house
> And spoil your sniggering! O what, you 're the man?
> You 're satisfied at last? You 've found out Sludge?

We 'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!
I too can tell my story: brute — do you hear? —
You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
In just such a fit of passion: no, it was . . .
To get this house of hers, and many a note
Like these. . . . I 'll pocket them, however . . . five,
Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!
Where was my head? I ought to have prophesied
He 'll die in a year and join her: that 's the way
. . . I said he 'd poisoned her,
And hoped he 'd have grace given him to repent,
Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
And called me cheat: I thrashed him, — who could help?
He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
To cut and run and save him from disgrace:
I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!
Boston 's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
V-notes are something, liberty still more!
Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

And so he went; but, if we may trust in recent police items in our papers, he has returned with seven others worse than himself. In one thing Sludge is absolutely right, — Horsefall is not the only fool in the world.

THE OPTIMISM OF WORDSWORTH AND BROWNING, IN RELATION TO MODERN PHILOSOPHY.

By A. J. GEORGE.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 24, 1895.]

The literature of this century derives its distinction from, if not its superiority over, that of any preceding century, from the fact that it has kept close to life — its passion, its pathos, its power.

> The movement it has told of life,
> Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife.

It has revealed

> The thread which binds it all in one,
> And not its separate parts alone.

We hear much in these days of the Spirit of the Age, and perhaps too little of the Spirit of the Ages. The spirit of any age, however enlightened it may be, is an unsafe guide if it does not embody the best of what the ages have found to be true. We are constantly elevating costume above character, the transient above the abiding, phenomena above noumena, method above spirit. Our attention is directed away from the great sources of power to the forms under which that power has revealed itself.

The moral progress of the world is most impressive and instructive when viewed in the great moments of the inner life, — those moments awful when power streamed forth; and the soul received "the Light reflected, as a light bestowed." These are the periods when earnest souls

get glimpses of the eternal truths; it is then that a height is reached in life from which are glimpses of "a height that is higher." This is merely affirming that, consciously or unconsciously, the race has lived and moved and had its being in one or the other of two great conceptions of human life: the ideal or the material; or, in terms of philosophy, Idealism or Materialism. The various forms of Art are but the revelations of man's ascent of the heights and his vision there. The Vedic Hymns, the Hebrew Psalms, Greek Art in all its forms, are but the meeting-place of the finite and the infinite. Where there is no vision the people perish, is the revelation of history.

The history of English literature reflects the same movement from Chaucer to Tennyson; and even in our own time we find that, after the vision of the closing years of the last century had faded into the light of common day, in the early years of this we were again stirred to new activity by the vision and the voice of Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, and Emerson, and this has been the message:

> 'T is life whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh life, not death for which we pant;
> More life and fuller that I want.

As the man of rich and varied interests has been the man of the largest influence, — the most interesting character, — because of his sympathy with the life of our common humanity and his belief that it is at heart sound, so the literature which has reflected this godlike enthusiasm has been the literature of the greatest uplift in an age of marvellous material interests, — an age which, in its worship of the actual, was in danger of losing the real. The inspired singers and prophets of the century have sounded this note: —

> In faultless rhythm the ocean rolls,
> A rapturous silence thrills the skies;
> And on this earth are lovely souls,
> That softly look with aidful eyes.

Though dark, O God, thy course and track,
We think Thou must at least have meant
That nought which lives should wholly lack
The things that are more excellent.

Mr. Richard Holt Hutton has given us a study of four leaders, guides to thought in matters of faith, — Newman, Arnold, Carlyle, and George Eliot, — who influenced the age through the art of prose. They represent certain phases of movement toward the new world where humanity is regarded as a spiritual totality, living, moving, and having its being in the life of the Eternal. One of our own members has done a similar work in 'The Life of the Spirit in the Modern English Poets;' [1] for it is in the poetry of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, Arnold, Clough, and Rossetti, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, that we find most clearly reflected the great awakening. If these writers found a volume necessary to represent adequately their impressions of this movement, but little will be expected of one who attempts to treat it in a single hour. My aim is a simple, and I trust a modest, one of trying to show how one of the earliest of this gladsome choir, — the poet of serene and blessed moods, — whence came visions of —

Something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, —

clasps hands across the century with that later fellow-labourer, — the poet of *tasks* who, as he marched breast forward, cried, "Speed, fight on, strive and thrive."

It is indeed worth our while to study the mind and art of such teachers at a time when certain other aspirants for leadership come to us and say: "You can dismiss as a fond dream the doctrine of a Divine Father. You are of age, and do not need a Father." Or again: "We are realists, looking facts in the face, and see no evidence in the world that throughout the ages one unceasing purpose of wisdom and goodness runs."

[1] Miss Vida D. Scudder.

There is a story, told with a great deal of satisfaction by the dalesmen of the little valley of Seathwaite in the English Lakes, of an old rector who in time of drought had been ordered by the bishop to offer prayers for rain. On the day appointed for that service he went out and made the usual observations as to sky and wind, and then went to his chapel and announced to his congregation that it was of no use for them to pray for rain so long as the wind was blowing over Hard-Nott. He did not think it wise to fly in the face of Providence as revealed in the laws of nature.

We are not always so wise as was this Cumberland dalesman, for we often invoke blessings from the great creators of literature in defiance of the fact that the wind is blowing over Hard-Nott. We do not study the conditions governing our own natures, — we forget that the wind is blowing over Hard-Nott.

There was a time when it was thought possible to fully understand a great author, or a great era in history, by confining one's attention to that author or that era; but methods of interpretation in literature and history have been revolutionised by the application of the great principle of Evolution. The greatest obstacle to progress in the new methods has been the disposition of a coterie or a clique to close its eyes to everything but the one object of veneration, be that object a person, a book, or a given period in the world's history.

We have had during the last quarter of our century some striking illustrations of the new spirit, the most noteworthy being in the sphere of what is known as Higher Criticism. The Lowell Institute lectures of two years ago, by a prominent College president and orthodox clergyman, furnished a beautiful example of the new spirit and the new method. The lecturer sought for the religious content in institutions and in literature which twenty-five years ago would have been considered as totally irreligious.

When the Wordsworth Society was instituted, Mr.

Matthew Arnold took great pains to warn its members against the spirit of a clique. — He said: "If we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public, we must recommend him, not in the spirit of a clique but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry." [1] We must avoid the historical estimate, and the personal estimate, and we must seek the *real estimate*. Stopford Brooke not long after Browning's death warned us against those "who deceive themselves into a belief that they enjoy poetry because they enjoy Browning, while they never open Milton and have only heard of Chaucer and Spenser." [2]

A third great teacher and interpreter of literature, Professor Dowden, has sounded the same note of warning and has pointed out the only method by which we can arrive at a real estimate. "Our prime object," says he, "should be to get into living relation with a man, with the good forces of nature and humanity that play in and through him. Approach a great writer in the spirit of cheerful and trustful fraternity; this is better than hero-worship. A great master is better pleased to find a brother than a worshipper or a serf." In keeping close to the great writers from Homer to Tennyson, we keep close to life, and we thus become "members of the one Catholic Apostolic Church of literature, and it will matter little who may be the bishop of our particular diocese." [3]

I present no literary creed to which I demand assent, nor do I hold a brief as for a client. I shall try to reveal an attitude of mind which has been produced by reading and reflection, — an attitude which may be modified or even supplanted by further reading and reflection. My position is neither that of a defendant nor that of a judge, but that of a guide. Now, the requisites for a good guide are: familiarity with the ground, and a willingness to

[1] 'Essays in Criticism,' 'Wordsworth.'
[2] *Century Magazine*, Dec. 1892, 'Impressions of Browning.'
[3] 'Transcripts and Studies,' 'The Interpretation of Literature.'

keep himself in the background and allow us to do our own seeing.

The disposition which we call optimism as it reveals itself in literature and life is difficult of exact definition, and yet "we must image the whole, then execute the parts." We need such a conception as will admit of the poetic and the philosophic essentials, — that will not be so poetic as to be vague nor so philosophic as to be abstruse, — and we find such in the affirmation of the essential spiritual nature of the universe. This enthrones man upon the heights, for it regards him in his threefold nature —

What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man —

as the goal of Creative Energy and the special object of God's love. Pessimism is the denial of any such spiritual element in the universe and the consequent dethronement of man. "If indeed there were a Rational Author of Nature, and if in any degree, even the most insignificant, we shared His attributes, we might well conceive ourselves as of finer essence and more intrinsic worth than the material world which we inhabit, immeasurable though it may be. But if we be the creation of that world; if it made us what we are, and will again unmake us: how then?" [1] Of course life can then have no more significance to us than to an earth-worm. We are —

Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

"Once dethrone Humanity, regard it as a mere local incident in an endless and aimless series of cosmical changes, and you arrive at a doctrine, which, under whatever specious name it may be veiled, is at bottom neither more nor less than Atheism." [2]

There is a class of writers claiming to be teachers who, while accepting what they call the demonstrations of the understanding as to man's origin and destiny, yet attempt

[1] A. J. Balfour: 'Foundations of Belief.'
[2] John Fiske: 'Destiny of Man.'

to save him from the inevitable abyss, — from being "drown'd in the deeps of a meaningless Past."

> Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
> I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
> Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
> Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears.[1]
>
> Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
> As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
> Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
> What love was ever as deep as the grave?
> They are loveless now as the grass above them,
> Or the wave.[2]

We may delight in these pretty theories while life moves serenely, but when the storm and stress comes we then find we have need of such revelations as the world has tested. The future of the human race, according to the creed of these social reformers, is to be "a kind of affectionate picnic." What is all this but "a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's anger of bees in their hive?" It is when we turn from such "idle singers of an empty day" to the great poets, that we are thrilled with the wild joys of living.

With the optimism of Wordsworth and Browning, we are all more or less familiar, but are we equally familiar with the causes and the nature of this personal note in each, by which one became the bearer of "plenteous health, exceeding store of joy, and an impassioned quietude;" and the other became "the Subtlest Assertor of the Soul in Song"?

In any attempt to assign causes for the optimism of a great teacher the influences of hereditary predisposition and of environment must be given a place, but a place subordinate to that third somewhat, — which we can neither analyse nor define, but which we know as the essential self, — the individuality.

[1] William Morris. [2] A. C. Swinburne.

In the case of Wordsworth, heredity and early environment were no doubt of deep significance, and I fear that too often they have been used as a sufficient cause of his optimism. I wish to show that they were efficient, but not sufficient; that in Wordsworth's work we have not only the profoundest thought, but well-ordered thought, in union with poetic sensibility unique and unmatchable; that in the union of "natural magic and moral profundity" the great body of his work is making for "rest and peace, and shade for spirits fevered with the sun" in a time when "there is no shelter to grow ripe, no leisure to grow wise." Emerson gave a just estimate of the value of heredity and environment in the problem which Wordsworth was to work out, when he said: "It is very easy to see that to act so powerfully in this practical age — as this solitariest and wisest of poets did — he needed, with all his Oriental abstraction, the indomitable vigour rooted in animal constitution for which his countrymen are marked."

I shall seek for my materials in that storehouse of youthful power and passion, the 'Prelude': that story of the "Love of Nature leading to the love of Man," where are revealed the sources of Wordsworth's power as man and as poet.

His school days were spent in the rural valley of Hawkshead, at the Edward VI. School. There he lived the simple life of the dalesmen, until he was prepared for the work of the university. He was a lover of the woods, the hills and the lakes, and these localities are rich in associations with his boyish sports, of harrying the raven's nest, of "setting springes for woodcock that run along the smooth green turf," and of boating on Esthwaite and Windermere. The first period, or seed-time of his soul, may be called the period of *unconscious* relation to Nature, and it is of importance to bear in mind the fact, that in it he was living the free, simple, spontaneous life of a boy among boys, with nothing to distinguish him from his

mates. He was thus saved from becoming either a prig or a prodigy.

> Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
> And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
> The faces of the moving year, even then
> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

But in due time came the period of *conscious* love of Nature, which is a step of profound significance; here is the beginning of the "philosophic mind:" —

> Those incidental charms which first attached
> My heart to rural objects, day by day
> Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
> How Nature, intervenient till this time
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake.

It was in this period that the basis of his optimism was laid; then it was that the essential spiritual nature of the universe was revealed to him. It is this note that characterises all of his poems on Nature. It is his master vision — God in nature. He now sees into the *life* of things

> By observation of affinities
> In objects where no brotherhood exists
> To passive minds.
>
> I was only then
> Contented, when with bliss ineffable
> I felt the sentiment of Being spread
> O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
> O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
> And human knowledge, to the human eye
> Invisible, yet liveth to the heart
> O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
> Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
> Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
> And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
> If high the transport, great the joy I felt,

Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.

To every Form of being is assigned
An *active* principle: — howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters, and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.

This was a note absolutely new in English poetry. It is the note which is sounded in every poem written before he rises into the sphere of the humanities and becomes the poet of man. I could illustrate it from thousands of his verses. It rises to its highest point of exultation in the 'Tintern Abbey': —

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

The significance of this revelation as poetry has had its due recognition, but in the closing years of the century we are getting its significance as philosophy.

Those who have followed the movements of modern thought have not failed to notice that the theist no longer gives much time to defending the outposts, when the central

citadel is attacked; this central citadel is the spiritual content of nature itself. Such works as Martineau's 'Seat of Authority in Religion,' Fiske's 'Destiny of Man' and 'Idea of God,' Marshall's 'Lectures on Evolution,' Knight's 'Aspects of Theism,' Caird's 'Philosophy of Religion,' Myers's 'Science and a Future Life,' and Balfour's 'Foundations of Belief' make this very evident. "The decisive battles of Theology are fought beyond its frontiers. It is not over purely religious controversies that the cause of Religion is lost or won. The judgments we shall form upon its special problems are commonly settled for us by our general mode of looking at the Universe."[1] Mr. John Fiske, in his address upon the 'Everlasting Significance of the Idea of Religion,' gave especial prominence to this same idea, as in the preface to his 'Idea of God' he had said: "It is enough to remind the reader that Deity is unknowable, just in so far as it is not manifested to consciousness through the phenomenal world, — knowable, just in so far as it is thus manifested; unknowable (in its entirety) in so far as it is infinite and absolute, — knowable in a symbolic way as the Power which is disclosed in every throb of the mighty rhythmic life of the Universe." Again, in Chapter I.: "As in the roaring loom of Time the endless web of events is woven, each strand shall make more and more clearly visible the living garment of God." Both Wordsworth and Fiske have had the vague and uninstructive epithet of "Pantheist" hurled at them by those who feared the results of sustained and accurate thinking. "Christianity assumes an unseen world, and then urges that the life of Christ is the fittest way in which such a world could come into contact with the world we know. The essential spirituality of the universe, in short, is the basis of religion, and it is precisely this basis which is now assailed. . . . It is on the ground of the cosmic law of interpenetrating worlds that I would claim for Wordsworth

[1] A. J. Balfour: 'Foundations of Belief.'

a commanding place among the teachers of this century."[1] "The special question, however, which we have to answer, is this: Is there, or is there not, a spiritual principle at the heart of things? Wordsworth saw, as very few have ever seen, that an incessant apocalypse is going on in Nature, which many of us altogether miss, and to which we all, at times, are blind; and that in the apprehension of this, — which is a real disclosure of the Infinite to the finite, as constant as the sunrise, or as the ebbing and the flowing of the tide — we find the basis of Theism laid for us."[2] Can there be any doubt as to the cause of Wordsworth's optimism or as to the significance of it in modern thought? Is it any wonder that he could sing of man, of Nature, and of human life with hardly a note of despondency, and never one of despair?

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things —
> With life and nature — purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognise
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

The final step in his ascent is that by which he rises from the love of Nature to the love of man. It was a critical moment for him when he was transferred from the calm delights and simple manners of Hawkshead to that world within a world — a great university. "Migration strange for a stripling of the hills." Cambridge could present nothing in kind to take the place of those sights and sounds sublime with which he had been conversant,

[1] F. W. Myers: 'Science and a Future Life.'
[2] Wm. Knight: 'Aspects of Theism.'

but she offered him those treasures which had been created for her by the hand of man.

> Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
> Had ceased to dazzle, ofttimes did I quit
> My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,
> And as I paced alone the level fields
> Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
> With which I had been conversant, the mind
> Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
> With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
> At least I more distinctly recognised
> Her native instincts: let me dare to speak
> A higher language, say that now I felt
> What independent solaces were mine,
> To mitigate the injurious sway of place
> Or circumstance, how far soever changed
> In youth, or to be changed in after years.

Here we have a still higher note of optimism, and again we must study origins. His mind drooped not because he had as an everlasting possession the harvest of that first period of unconscious intercourse with Nature, — the riches which came to him in that period of health and happiness were the riches of

> Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health —
> Truth, breathed by cheerfulness.

I am inclined to think that this is the most immediately helpful of all the poet's revelations. It is the fundamental note in the 'Character of the Happy Warrior.'

> Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
> That every man in arms should wish to be?
> — It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
> Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
> Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
> Whose high endeavours are an inward light
> That makes the path before him always bright:
> Who, with a natural instinct to discern
> What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
> Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
> But makes his moral being his prime care;
> . . . . . .
> 'T is, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,
> Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,

Or left unthought-of in obscurity, —
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not —
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won:
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpast:
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead unprofitable name —
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:
This is the happy Warrior; this is He
That every Man in arms should wish to be.

It is this power to transmute sorrow, disappointment, and defeat into means of strength that makes his poetry such a tonic to the weary and heavy laden. When we rise to the heights, and can say in the face of disappointment, —

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,

we have gained the secret of Wordsworth's optimism, and then "deep distress will humanise our souls," or as Tennyson expresses it in 'In Memoriam,' "will make us kindlier with our kind."

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 't is surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here. —
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

I cannot leave this feature of Wordsworth's optimism without alluding to the effect it has had upon two different

types of men. It will show what a sure retreat great souls offer in times of bewilderment. John Stuart Mill, in that crisis of life when he had lost all substantive joy, in profound despondency went to the poetry of Wordsworth. He says: "What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind was that from them I learned what were the perennial sources of happiness, and I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence." Mr. Leslie Stephen says: "Other poetry becomes trifling when we are making our inevitable passages through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Wordsworth's alone retains its power. We love the more as we grow older, and become more deeply impressed with the sadness and seriousness of life." Lowell, who was by no means unduly sympathetic in his criticism of Wordsworth, everywhere pays tribute to his splendid optimism, and says: "He reads the poems of Wordsworth without understanding, who does not find in them the noblest incentives to faith in man and the grandeur of his destiny." I shall never forget the emphasis with which the late Bishop Brooks, on receiving a copy of the 'Prelude,' affirmed to me his admiration for Wordsworth's magnificent optimism, — "an optimism," said he, "which is as sound and wholesome as the air of the forest."

I shall close my review of the optimism of Wordsworth with the testimony of Professor Caird, Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

"In the 'Prelude' Wordsworth seeks to exhibit to us, not so much of his own personal career, as the way in which, amid the difficulties of the time, a human soul might find peace and freedom. He rejects any claim to exceptional privileges, and takes his stand upon the rights of simple humanity. Out of this sense of the spiritual greatness, the 'Godhead' of human nature, springs what we might call, in philosophical terms, the optimism of Wordsworth, — his assertion that good is stronger than

evil, and even that the latter is but the means of the development of the former. Wordsworth's optimism has no fear of sorrow or of evil. He can stand in the shadow of death and pain, ruin and failure, with sympathy that is almost painful in its quiet intensity; the faith in the omnipotence 'of love and man's unconquerable mind' is never destroyed or weakened in him. The contemplation of evil and pain always ends with him, by an inevitable recoil, in an inspired expression of his faith in the good which transmutes and transfigures it, as the clouds are changed into manifestations of the sunlight they strive to hide." [1]

In passing from the optimism of Wordsworth to that of Browning we cannot do better than maintain the disposition shown by the older to the younger poet that evening at the rooms of Talfourd, when — in the presence of Macready, Landor, Miss Mitford, and others, — the host proposed "The Poets of England," and with a kindly grace having alluded to the company of great men honouring him with their presence, presented "Mr. Robert Browning, the author of 'Paracelsus.'" Miss Mitford, in speaking of the pride which Browning must have felt at that moment, says: "He was prouder still when Wordsworth leaned across the table and with stately affability said, 'I am proud to drink your health, Mr. Browning.'" All Wordsworthians, all disinterested lovers of poetry, are proud to drink the health of Robert Browning.

We have seen that Wordsworth's optimism did not result from any victory of the intellect over the perplexities of a scientific age. The era of modern science had not begun when this poet did his great work, but yet he foresaw what was sure to come with such an age. He foresaw that men would "pore," and was disturbed with the thought that they might "dwindle as they pored," and yet he had no fears that the most extensive researches

[1] E. Caird: 'Literature and Philosophy.'

of science would cut the nerve of poetry. He saw the dangers of the new age, and yet he could say: —

> I exult,
> Casting reserve away, exult to see
> An intellectual mastery exercised
> O'er the blind elements.

"The knowledge, both of the Poet and the Man of science," he says, "is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition. The Man of science cherishes and loves truth in solitude; the poet singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, shall be ready to put on, as it were, the form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man."[1]

The student of Tennyson and Browning in the closing years of our century is witnessing the fulfilment of this prophecy of the last year of the previous century. Tennyson in accepting what was once thought to be a step toward atheism, *i. e.* Evolution, says: —

> If my body come from brutes tho' somewhat finer than their own,
> I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
> No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
> Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute.
>
> I have climbed to the snows of Age and I gaze at a field in the Past,
> Where I sank with the body, at times, in the sloughs of a low desire,
> But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
> As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.

[1] 'Prefaces and Essays on Poetry,' A. J. George, ed.

Again,

> Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
> Against her beauty? May she mix
> With men and prosper! Who shall fix,
> Her pillars? Let her work prevail.
> . . . . .
> What is she, cut from love and faith,
> But some wild Pallas from the brain
>
> Of Demons. . . .
> . . . Let her know her place;
> She is the second, not the first.

Browning with his first plunge into the depths said in 'Paracelsus' —

> Know, not for Knowing's sake,
> But to become a star to men for ever;
> Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
> The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds:
> Look one step onward, and secure that step!
>
> To Know
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without.

Thus we see that neither of these great poets feared to follow wherever science might lead.

In 'Paracelsus' we have united the two great principles which lie at the basis of all Browning's work: one, which has for its end, knowledge; the other, which has for its end, conduct. The first is Browning's philosophy; the second, Browning's art. These correspond very well to the two great classes of literature as given by Matthew Arnold: Scientific, ministering to our instinct for knowledge; Poetic, ministering to our instinct for conduct and beauty. Along these lines all life must move, and the poet who attempts to lead here needs all the courage of the most resolute: —

> Must keep ever at his side
> The tonic of a wholesome pride.

> For, ah! so much he has to do:
> Be painter and musician too!
> The aspect of the moment show,
> The feeling of the moment know!
> But, ah, then comes his sorest spell
> Of toil, — he must life's *movement* tell!
> The thread which binds it all in one
> And not its separate parts alone.
> The movement he must tell of life,
> Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife;
> His eye must travel down at full
> The long unpausing spectacle;
> With faithful unrelaxing force
> Attend it from its primal source,
> Attend it to the last repose,
> And solemn silence of its close.

Browning, more than any poet of modern times, has that intellectual fearlessness which is thoroughly Greek; he looks unflinchingly upon all that meets him, and he apparently cares not for consequences. This impetuosity of mental action, as I have already pointed out, resulted in that duality which he seemed so careless about unifying, — philosophy and ethics. It is admitted by all that Browning appeals to the head for the solution of the problem of evil, and that when he does this he works, not as an artist and poet, dealing with life as a whole, but as a philosopher interested in certain problems suggested by the mind itself. His solution of the problem of evil can be stated in a few words. Starting with the great principle of evolution, that man is ever becoming, "made to grow not stop," —

> A thing nor God nor beast,
> Made to know that he can know and not more:
> Lower than God who knows all and can all,
> Higher than beasts which know and can so far
> As each beast's limit,

Browning is bound to follow life through all its stages of pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, faith and doubt, and face the stern realities. How is he able to do this and not

become a pessimist? He sees clearly all the struggle and misery; he selects a Guido on the one hand, and a Saul on the other; here a student "dead from the waist down," there a faithful teacher left to die in the desert, in order that he may be certain that he has seen life as it actually is. Nothing can save him from despair but the idea that man is working out a moral ideal, in which God is omnipresent, and that the manifestation of God's presence in man is love:

> Be warned by me,
> Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
> Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

Now this love is made perfect through suffering. "Man is a god though in the germ." This is perception, not demonstration, and Browning has sought refuge in poetry, not philosophy; but he will do better next time? Let us see what he does when asked to demonstrate the truth of this faith in the unity of God and man: —

> Take the joys and bear the sorrows — neither with extreme concern!
> Living here means nescience simply, 't is next life that helps to learn.

again, —

> Knowledge means
> Ever-renewed assurance by defeat,
> That victory is somehow still to reach.

There is no demonstration here surely: —

> To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,
> Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red and green.

Each man has his own criterion — to question is absurd. Can it be that Browning is teaching a fatal agnosticism?

> Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
> As wholly love allied to ignorance!
> There lies thy truth and safety.

What shall we say to attaining even a moral life by such a sacrifice? Shall we cast doubt upon the head in order to secure the heart? This seems, at least, to be an entire

abandonment of the principle from which modern philosophy had its origin, — *Cogito ergo sum*. It is philosophical suicide to say that man possesses

> Of knowledge — just so much as shows that still
> It ends in ignorance on every side.

He says if knowledge were not relative, knowledge could not be, and moral activity would have no sphere —

> Make evident that pain
> Permissibly masks pleasure — you abstain
> From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
> A drowning fly.

This is the argument of the 'Epistle of Karshish,' — and what is the result? It is a flat denial of the basal idea of modern philosophy, that "all true thought is divine thought, — thought, that is, which is not arbitrary and accidental, but in which the individual mind surrenders its narrow individualism, and enters into the region of universal and absolute truth. If, therefore, rational knowledge is, in one point of view, man's knowledge of God, it is in another God's knowledge of himself." All of this Browning clearly and explicitly denies; with him God is the *Unknowable*, and yet he worships. Here the self-contradiction lies — for "worship of the Unknowable is an impossible attitude of mind." The doctrine of relativity of human knowledge is that which, beginning with Kant, continued by Sir William Hamilton and Mansel, has had its chief defender in Herbert Spencer. Is Browning the thinker tending in the same direction? Those who are no enemies of the great poet, but who know his mental attitude, do not hesitate to say, "Yes, we must confess it, Browning the philosopher fails us here; there is no optimism here; we must turn to Browning the poet."

We need not be disturbed in the least at the results reached in our study of Browning the philosopher; we

should be willing to look facts in the face. We all know that the best criticism of Browning (the most thorough and sympathetic) has insisted upon Browning the poet as the Browning who is to live. Modern philosophy takes no notice of Browning except to show that his philosophy — if philosophy it can be called — leads to agnosticism. I know there are those who claim that Browning's final utterances are to be found in the argumentative poems because they were, for the most part, his latest utterances. Even were these believed by the poet himself to be of the highest worth, he could not persuade us to that conclusion. Stopford Brooke says: "The very highest scientific intellect is a joke in comparison with the intellectual power of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare," and so we say that the scientific Browning is a joke in comparison with the poetic Browning. Again says Mr. Brooke: "I hold fast to one thing — that the best work of our poet, that by which he will always live, is not in his intellectual analysis, or in his preaching, or in his difficult thinkings, but in the simple, sensuous, and impassioned things he wrote out of the overflowing of his heart."[1]

Mr. William Sharp says: "It is as the poet he will live; not merely as the 'novel thinker' in verse; logically, his attitude as thinker is unimpressive."[2] "A Philosophy of life," says Professor Jones, "which is based on agnosticism is an explicit self-contradiction, which can help no one. We must appeal from Browning the philosopher to Browning the poet."[3] "It was not much of a philosophy," says Mr. Saintsbury, "this which the poet half echoed from and half taught to the second half of the nineteenth century. But the poet is always saved by his poetry, and this is the case with Browning."[4] I could continue this list indefinitely. These men are not hostile to Browning; they

[1] 'Impresssons of Browning.'
[2] 'Browning,' Great Writers' Series.
[3] 'Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher.'
[4] 'Corrected Impressions.'

are his most sympathetic interpreters: but they appeal from the Aristotelianism of Browning to his Platonism, and here too much cannot be said; here his optimism is no trailing cloud, but a bright consummate star, shining clear and steady in the heavens from which so many have paled their ineffectual fire.

Browning the poet quietly ignores the logical consequences of the theories held by Browning the philosopher, and gives us, not what is contrary to philosophy in general, but what is contrary only to his own poor argument; he gives us the very thing which poetry is bound to give — "such a living faith in God's relation to man as leaves no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed order so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain. This faith is manifested in the highest form in Christian Theism."[1] Browning's optimism as poet and man is the result of Browning's Christian Theism.

But before passing on let me forestall any thought on your part that I believe optimism must always be born out of our poetic — our intuitional nature. It by no means follows that because Browning's philosophy fails philosophic thought fails, — that the rationalising activity of our age must be feared. While immediate and spontaneous experience is clothed with more interest, more vivacity, more fulness and glow of life, we must never consider the inevitable processes of reflection vain or valueless. Our trust in the heart need not weaken our belief in the head. "The human spirit is not a thing divided against itself, so that faith and reason can subsist side by side in the same mind, each asserting as absolute, principles which are contradicted by the other." We are not shut up to the alternative of giving either a bad reason, or no reason at all for our highest convictions. If it is not possible to explain them rationally without explaining them away, the outcome is universal scepticism. There is a profounder logic

[1] A. J. Balfour: 'Foundations of Belief.'

than the syllogism, — "the logic which enters into the genesis and traces the secret rhythm and evolution of thought, which grasps the constituent elements in that living process of which all truth consists." [1]

I have alluded to the fact that Browning as a poet dared to do what Wordsworth predicted the poet of the age of science could do. He has dared to follow side by side with the scientist, and use the material of the scientist for the ends of poetry. This work is distinctly different from that which Browning the philosopher does. This is nowhere more clearly revealed to us than in that very suggestive little book by Dr. Berdoe, — 'Browning's Message to his Time.' Dr. Berdoe nowhere claims for Browning a place among the great philosophers; but he rightly claims for him a place among the prophets. Browning as a prophet moves in a sphere for ever undisturbed by the revelations of the scientist, simply because it is the sphere of poetry, the sphere of man's loves, man's hopes, man's aspirations. As Wordsworth did more for mankind by his 'Ode to Duty' and his 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' than by his 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets,' as Tennyson sounded a higher note in his 'In Memoriam' than in his 'Two Voices' and the 'Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind,' so Browning contributed more to the spiritual movement of the age by his 'Saul,' 'Apparent Failure,' 'Prospice,' 'Abt Vogler,' etc., than by all his argumentative verse. These are indeed veritable fountain-heads of spiritual power. "High art," says Mr. Myers, "is based upon unprovable intuitions, and of all the arts it is poetry whose intuitions take the brightest glow, and best illumine the mystery without us from the mystery within." [2] This I should say was the secret of Browning's work as an optimist, — he illumines the mystery without by the mystery within: —

[1] J. Caird: 'Philosophy of Religion.'
[2] 'Science and A Future Life.'

> Strong is the soul, and wise and beautiful;
> The seeds of God-like power are in us still;
> Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!
> Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

This is the note sounding everywhere in Browning's poetry. It is an appeal to the God-consciousness in every man — "what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose."

He is far in advance of our institutional Christianity, and he leads the column of our Christian socialism:

> Would you have your songs endure?
> Build on the human heart.

What think you would be the result if our churches caught even a faint glimpse of this great truth and lived it for one short day? —

> And God is seen God
> In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul, and the clod.

When we see the mad scramble for wealth and position by those who have never for one moment stopped to ask themselves what is the great gulf between the actual and the real, are we not tempted to say with our poet —

> Fool, all that is, at all,
> Lasts ever, past recall;
> Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure?

If we go to the sorrowing multitude about us in an attempt to console and lift them, are not our words "vacant chaff, well meant for grain," unless we can charge them with the magnificent hope of, "On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round"? If this is a delusion, then "'t were better not to be." Is there any finer scorn of the world and the ways of it than in —

> Not on the vulgar mass
> Called "work," must sentence pass,
> Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
> O'er which, from level stand,
> The low world laid its hand,
> Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
. . . .
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God.

It is no easy-going moral creed that we find in —

Progress is the law of life, man is not Man as yet.

A principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all.

Oh if we draw a circle premature, heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit,
Surely, bad is our bargain.

Browning enunciates the same law for the soul that socialists do for man's physical life, — that there shall be no monopoly of the means by which it may be developed. He is a socialist of the purest type, when he asserts that if we put impediments in the way of the free development of one of God's creatures we incur the anathema pronounced on those who offend one "of these little ones," "For the All-great were the all-loving too."

We see, therefore, that the optimism of Browning is the optimism of Christianity in its simplicity and directness:

Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both of such lower types are we;
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs; — ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.

The joyous fearless activity of Browning; the noble aspirations of his intellect and the mighty passions of his heart; the steady certainty that God and man are one in kind, naturally suggest to my mind an utterance of the

great poet-preacher of our time: "One is ready," he says, "to have tolerance, respect, and hope for any man, who, reaching after God, is awed by God's immensity and his own littleness, and falls back crushed and doubtful. His is a doubt which is born in the secret chambers of his own personal conscientiousness. It is independent of his circumstances and surroundings. The soul that has truly come to a personal doubt finds it hard to conceive of any ages of most implicit faith in which it could have lived, in which that doubt would not have been in it. All that one understands, and the more one understands it, the more unintelligible does it seem to him, that any earnest soul can really lay its doubt upon the age, the set, or the society it lives in. No: our age, our society is what we have been calling it. It is the furnace. Its fire can set and fix and fasten what the man puts into it. But, properly speaking, it can create no character. It can make no truly faithful soul a doubter. It never did. It never can."

Now in closing let us unite the optimism of these two prophets with a golden link forged by that third great seer in our century: —

> We desire no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
> Give us the wages of going on, and not to die.

I can see no better ground for optimism than that of these poets —

> While blossoms and the budding spray
> Inspire us in our own decay;
> Still, as we nearer draw to life's dark goal,
> Be hopeful Spring the favourite of the Soul.
>
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That after Last, returns the First, —
> Though a wide compass round be fetched, —
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accursed.

These surpassing spirits — in their serene faith in God and immortality, in their yearning for expansion of the subtle thing called Spirit, —

> Never turn their backs, but march breast forward,
> Never doubt clouds will break,
> Never dream, though right be worsted, wrong will triumph,
> Hold we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

'SORDELLO.'

By CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, April 28, 1895.]

Browning is sometimes not easy reading, but I think that his obscurity has been greatly exaggerated. I see no reason why the greater part of his poems should be considered more difficult than the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare. By common consent the palm for obscurity has been given, and rightly, to 'Sordello.' It would be interesting to discuss at more length than there is here space for the sources of the difficulties that the student of Browning meets in general, and in this poem in particular. In 'Pacchiarotto' the poet implies that his obscurity arises from the greatness of his thoughts. He there says to his critics, —

> But had you to put in one small line
> Some thought big and bouncing — as noddle
> Of goose, born to cackle and waddle
> And bite at man's heel as goose-wont is,
> Never felt plague its puny *os frontis* —
> You 'd know, as you hissed, spat and spluttered
> *Clear cackle is easily uttered!*

I doubt, however, if the thought of Browning is often so large that it cannot be clearly expressed. So far as the poem before us is concerned, it must be confessed that its obscurity consists, in part at least, in what in any other author would be considered bad writing. The sentences, as is not uncommon in Browning, are often greatly involved. The construction is sometimes so forced as to put a slight strain even on the rules of grammar. We have,

for instance, relatives looking wildly for their antecedents, who are too much occupied to pay them any attention. Besides this form of obscurity that results from lack of command of the material, there is another which is more peculiar to Browning, and springs indeed from the quality of his genius. He sees relations more far-reaching than are commonly discerned. These look so clear to him that it does not occur to him that they will not be equally obvious to the reader. Thus he has sudden turns of expression which are not always easy to follow. While speaking of one thing, he will suddenly pass to another, and the reader may fail to see the connection. The reader is a little like a caterpillar who should start out for a walk with an amiable grasshopper. They begin very fairly together; but suddenly he sees his friend swinging on a spear of grass feet away, and how he got there and how he is to be followed are difficult questions. To take a striking example, — near the beginning of the poem Browning seems to himself to be surrounded not only by a human, but also by a ghostly audience. One of these spirits he warns away in an eloquent apostrophe, feeling that his own verses would sound harsh beside the song of the poet whose spiritual presence he thus deprecates. There is nothing in the poem to show who is meant. In a later edition Browning added a running commentary at the top of the page, so that we now know that he referred to Shelley. At the end of the third book there is an apostrophe to a poet whom those thoroughly familiar with his writings would recognise as Landor. Most readers have to learn this, if they learn it at all, from the commentators. These are only examples of the kind of allusion with which these pages bristle. Sometimes they are to obscure historical events or personages. Sometimes they are to passing fancies. In this latter case, close attention and a little play of imagination on the reader's part will often help him over the difficulty. Where the trouble springs from

ignorance there is no help but in the commentaries, and not always in them.

A part of the difficulty which some experience in reading Browning springs from the fact that they try to understand more than is absolutely necessary, and are troubled because they cannot do this. Browning makes an allusion, for instance, the appositeness of which is obvious. One does well often to let this stand as it is, and not try to piece out the whole story. Take, for instance, the allusion at the opening of 'Sordello' to "Pentapolin named o' the Naked Arm," and the "friendless people's friend." It was long before I understood, not being fresh from my 'Don Quixote,' who these personages might be, and I did not care very much to inform myself of their story. It is a magnificent picture at which the poet hints. It makes us feel the magic of his power as he singles out

> Sordello compassed murkily about
> With ravage of six long, sad, hundred years,

and I felt that all the dictionaries and histories in the city library could hardly add to the effect. Why, then, should I lose the enjoyment of this picture because, forsooth, I did not know who "Pentapolin named o' the Naked Arm" was. Recently a friend kindly enlightened my ignorance; but I confess that I do not find my enjoyment of the poem increased by the information. In reading Browning one has, thus, often to exercise a self-restraint to keep one's place simply at the point of proper focus, and enjoy the picture which the poet places before us, asking no questions.

I will venture to say further that a little obscurity is not necessarily a fault in a poem. In the first place, it fixes the attention. When we read with perfect ease we may pass over the ground so rapidly that some of the beauties that we meet do not impress themselves upon us as they should. We may even wholly overlook them. I am in-

clined to think that many readers fail to recognise the profundity of certain passages in Tennyson because they float so easily and so rapidly over the clear depths.

Further, a certain amount of obscurity may add real force to the style. One of the heresies of Herbert Spencer is his insistence that strength in style is measured by ease of apprehension. This is much like saying that the hose of a fire-engine throws water with a force that is measured by the ease of its outlet; so that the most open-mouthed hose would throw water the farthest. In a perfectly lucid style we reach the author's thought easily and gradually. It is built up before us by slow degrees. If the style has some little obscurity, we hesitate in regard to the significance of a sentence. The expressions have at first little meaning to us; the mind is under a strain of suspense. At last we reach the key-word, and the whole meaning flashes upon us at once. We have a certain shock of surprise and pleasure.

Of course this is true only within certain limits and of certain kinds of obscurity. The writer must have genius enough to stimulate this strain of suspense and to repay it. There are certain relations of things that cannot be taken in at a glance. Certain involutions of expression may best bring these to consciousness. The *motif* of a movement in a symphony of Beethoven can be expressed simply enough; but who finds fault with the great composer because he sees fit to present it in ways that put a strain on the attention even of the expert?

It seemed proper to introduce an examination of 'Sordello' by a few words in regard to Browning's obscurity, for this obscurity is all that the title suggests to many minds. It must be admitted that in this poem obscurity is sometimes carried beyond the lines within which it gives strength. The poet himself was somewhat troubled by the difficulty that so many found in reading it. He began to rework it, but decided to leave it for the most part as it

was. He did add a sort of running explanation at the top of the pages. This, as I have already stated, makes clear to us in one place that Shelley is referred to, but, so far as I have noticed, it throws in general little light on difficult passages. The poet further implies that the reader need not trouble his head with the historical background, "the incidents in the development of a soul" being all that is worth study. He seems to have the impression that the difficulty lies largely with the historical allusions. These are sometimes obscure enough; but "the incidents in the development of a soul" are not always quite clear without a little study. The poet further, I am sorry to say, slightly loses his temper. He thinks that with "care for a man or a book" such difficulties would be easily surmounted. The grasshopper thinks that if the caterpillar really cared for his company, they might keep on very well together. He adds, however, "I blame nobody — least of all myself."

It is an interesting question why 'Sordello' should have this pre-eminence of obscurity. It is not more profound than many of the other poems, 'Paracelsus,' for instance. Browning's first poem, 'Pauline,' is in its theme not wholly unlike 'Sordello.' This was followed by 'Paracelsus.' Then 'Sordello' was begun. I gather that the first two books of this poem had been written when it was broken off in order that 'Strafford' might be created. Neither 'Pauline' nor 'Paracelsus' is difficult reading, and 'Strafford' is as easy as any one could desire. Why should 'Sordello,' preceded by two of these, and having the other interjected into its very heart, be so different?

The first answer that suggests itself is that while 'Pauline' and 'Paracelsus' are written in blank verse and 'Strafford' in prose, 'Sordello' is written in rhyme. It may be that the poet was thus hampered by conditions with which he was not familiar and of which he had not obtained the mastery. Perhaps even more important than

the limitations of rhyme and metre was the fact that they brought a peculiar inspiration with them. The poet may have felt more a poet. It may have seemed to him that a simple and straightforward telling of his story was hardly in keeping with the rhymed diction. He thus may have been moved to freer fancies and more intricate constructions, to minor affectations and mannerisms, which seemed to him to belong with the more ornamental metre and rhyme.

Still more important I conceive to be the fact that 'Sordello' is not, like most of the works of Browning, a dramatic poem. The dramatic form must obviously tend to produce a certain clearness and directness of utterance. When one speaks to an auditor, whether real or imagined, one speaks to be understood. When one soliloquises, it makes comparatively little difference whether one is understood or not. Most poets do not need this protection. The instinct of form may be sufficient to keep them within the proper limits. It may be that they have their readers or hearers present to their thought. It may be that their imagination is so well under command that it can be left to itself. With Browning the instinct of form was not sufficiently developed to control his expression, while his imagination was so active, his fancies so abundant and eager, his thought so agile, that when the restraint of an interlocutor, real or fancied, was absent, they held high carnival together.

The question now forces itself upon us, why is 'Sordello' thus exceptional among Browning's poems? We find the dramatic form in nearly all his poems, why not in this? On the first page of 'Sordello' he tells us that he would have preferred the dramatic form.

> . . . Never, — I should warn you first, —
> Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
> Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
> A story I could body forth so well
> By making speak, myself kept out of view,
> The very man as he was wont to do.

The reason he gives for not doing this is a very lame one, if indeed it can be called a reason; and we must try to solve the difficulty for ourselves. The question leads us to the very heart of our subject.

In a paper which I had the honour to present to this society some years ago, which was afterward published in 'The Andover Review,'[1] and which was entitled, 'The Tragic *Motif* in Browning's Dramas,' I tried to show that all or nearly all these dramas are based upon some form or other of a collision between feeling and thought; or, as we might phrase it, between the heart and the head. I have been greatly interested to notice that in the important work of Professor Jones on 'Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher,' the author, working, of course, without any reference to my paper, finds a like collision indicated in much of Browning's later poetry. In the plays these elements are embodied in different personalities. We have Paracelsus representing the intellect over against Aprile representing the heart. In 'Luria' we have the two elements of the nature represented by the Moorish general Luria, and Braccio, the cold, calculating diplomatist. In the plays, the collision being an outward one, the form is naturally dramatic. I ventured to illustrate this collision by a reference to 'Sordello.' This reference was so far justified that in Sordello the head and the heart are at variance, though this statement by no means exhausts the complexity of the inner division by which the spirit of Sordello is torn. In 'Sordello,' however, the collision is no longer an outward one. The warring elements no longer stand over against one another embodied in separated personalities. There is, properly speaking, to the story only one hero. The different parts of his nature are at war with one another, and in the strife he falls. The history is thus fitted to be the theme of an epic poem rather than of a tragedy.

[1] Volume xi. page 113.

The theme of 'Pauline' is indeed somewhat similar to that of 'Sordello.' In this we have a nature divided against itself, and the struggle is also an inner one; but in it, however, we have the dramatic form. The hero is the spokesman, and tells the story of his life to the lady of his love. This poem is, however, comparatively short, and its success was hardly sufficient to justify a similar experiment on a larger scale. The spirit that is a prey to contending passions, that yields now to one ideal and now to another, that is never content with itself, can hardly be expected to give a satisfactory account of its inner life. 'Pauline' is the incoherent cry of a struggling soul. It contains passages of rare beauty, but as a whole the author considered it a failure.

We notice, thus, in 'Sordello,' two conditions. In the first place, the author was trammelled by the unaccustomed rhyme. In the second place, he was free from the control of the dramatic form. The first of these conditions would naturally lead to certain artificial or involved forms of expression; the second would imply the absence of anything which should correct this tendency, and indeed would itself favour a looseness and vagueness of expression. To these conditions we will add that the poet was still young, and that the poem was to be a long one.

There is another side to all this. The freedom from the bonds imposed by the dramatic form, united with the tendency to play with the metrical machinery, would give the poet an opportunity to show his powers under a different aspect from that in which they ordinarily appear. He is free to play. He may give free scope to his fancies and his impulses. This, as we have seen, may give place to obscurities that might not exist under other circumstances. At the same time it gives place to unwonted beauties. Pegasus, we may say, is enjoying the freedom of the pasture. His movements are irregular, but they are full of grace. In fact, some of the most beautiful utterances of

the poet are found in this work. While this is true of the whole poem, I think it is especially true of the first two books and of the last. The subject treated in the first two has a special charm, and the poet felt the fresh inspiration of his theme. It was, you will remember, at about the close of the second book that he broke off his work to write 'Strafford.' The last book presents the culmination of the story. I must admit, however, that sometimes in reading the other books I am inclined to deny the superiority of those to which I have specially referred.

'Sordello' is, as I have intimated, the story of a life that was a failure because it was divided against itself. We may regard it as having two stages. The first of these closes with the second book. This presents the failure of Sordello as a poet. The remaining four books describe his failure as a man. Both failures have the same cause. They spring from a lack of spiritual coherence. Amid conflicting ideals and passions, with all his powers, Sordello accomplished nothing. The final defeat had, indeed, an aspect according to which it has a certain air of victory, so that the hero receives not merely our compassion, but to a certain extent our applause. Further, there is intimated a possible means by which the discordant nature of Sordello might have been brought into harmony with itself and thus into working order.

Let us now glance more directly at the development of the story, though it is an ungrateful task to detach the incidents of the poem from the music and the fancy in which the poet has embodied them.

The hero first appears in a pretty castle, where he lives almost alone. A few old women attend to his wants, and once in a while he catches a glimpse of Adelaide, the lady of the castle, skilled, so it is believed, in magic rites, and feared rather than loved. With her he has sometimes a glimpse of Palma, the fair daughter of the lord of the

castle, Ecelin, by a former marriage. He is "a slender boy in a loose page's dress."

> His face,
> — Look — now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
> (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
> A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
> With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
> Delight at every sense; you can believe
> Sordello foremost in the regal class
> Nature has broadly severed from her mass
> Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
> Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
> For loose fertility. . . .
> You recognise at once the finer dress
> Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
> At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
> (As though she would not trust them with her world)
> A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
> And lets but half the sun look fervid through.

"How can such love?" asks the poet, and a little later adds, —

> To remove
> A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude
> Their finding out themselves can work no good
> To what they love — nor make it very blest
> By their endeavour, — they are fain invest
> The lifeless thing with life from their own soul.

One characteristic marks such persons, — it is —

> A need to blend with each external charm,
> Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm, —
> In something not themselves; they would belong
> To what they worship.

There is another class that, instead of giving up themselves in passionate love to the beauty that they discover, refer each quality that they recognise to themselves. If they have not already manifested such qualities, they think that it is because circumstances did not favour such manifestation. It belongs to them none the less.

A little singularly, while we have thus presented to us different classes of minds that seem to be antithetic to one

another, Sordello appears to belong to them both. The description of the gentler class starts from the portraiture of Sordello; and the description of the second class passes into a portraiture of the same. Perhaps one represents his earlier, and the other his somewhat later, experience. At any rate, it is with the later that we have to do in following the story. Sordello is one of those self-conscious spirits that imagine themselves equal to any achievement, while at the same time they long with a passionate eagerness for recognition from the world.

At this point the poet pauses to give us a hint of that element in the nature of Sordello that is to prove his ruin. It is this, that he will not put forth his power because the opportunities that the world offers are not sufficient to fully manifest its greatness: —

> Or if yet worse befall,
> And a desire possess it to put all
> That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
> Contain it, — to display completely here
> The mastery another life should learn,
> Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —
> So that Sordello —

Here the poet breaks off abruptly, not finishing his sentence, and exclaims, —

> Fool, who spied the mark
> Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
> Already as he loiters ?

The condition first described is that of the spirit pictured in one of the most noteworthy of the poems of Emerson; a spirit which —

> Even in the hot pursuit of the best aims
> And prizes of ambition checks its hand,
> Like Alpine cataracts frozen as they leaped,
> Chilled with a miserly comparison
> Of the toy's purchase with the length of life.

The other is that of one who undertakes to embody a perfect ideal, — an ideal for which earth has no place, — and

fails because he strives to accomplish in time what belongs only to eternity.

The poet quickly draws a veil over this revelation, and proceeds to picture the life of Sordello in the midst of the beautiful nature that surrounded him. He found in the companionship of this nature all the happiness he needed. All the fair objects that encompassed him were his tributaries. The world was pledged to break up, sooner or later, this happy life; but its disenchantment could touch but tardily the youth that was so fenced about "from most that nurtures judgment, — care and pain." It was a selfish life, no doubt; but what was there to call out unselfishness in him? It was a peaceful existence, without the "throes and stings" that the conventional hero-worshipper assumes to mark the birth of genius. Time, however, at last put an end to this life of simple harmony with nature. The adoration of trees and flowers was no longer enough. The fancies that encompassed him detached themselves from simple, natural objects, and took form in imagined persons that surrounded him and paid him their homage. For himself he claimed all high qualities. Whatever heroic act he heard of stimulated his fancy. Ecelin, it seems, had with his sword overpowered a hired assassin that would take his life. Sordello felt that surely he could do as much. He tried to wield the brand, but it was too heavy for him. The time will come, he thinks, and bring the means for acting out himself. He strives to bend the rough-hewn ash-bow, but lets it fall from an aching wrist. It is better now to dream: —

> Straight, a gold shaft hissed
> Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
> Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town
> Is gained Him back!" Why bend rough ash bows more?

Thus he dreams, gathering to himself all strength and glory. He is not only Ecelin, he is the Emperor Frederick. He is still more; he is Apollo, the god of all strength and

grace; and since he learns that Palma has rejected Count Richard's suit, she seems worthy to figure in his dreams and share his honours.

This life in dreams, this identifying himself with one hero and another, we might almost venture to guess was not wholly foreign to the experience of Browning himself. At least it formed a part of his early ideal of aspiring and romantic youth. We find something similar in 'Pauline.' In this the speaker tells how he revelled in romances, and how he identified himself with the heroes of them.

At last Sordello grew weary and impatient. Fancies were not sufficient for his life. There came to his quiet corner no change. He resolves to go out and show himself to the great world. He might meet Palma. He might in some way be recognised for what he felt himself to be.

There was a festival in the city, a court of love. Sordello found himself, at last, face to face with the reality of life. No acclaim greeted him. There sat Palma, — the Palma of his dream; but to her he was nothing. He looked to see the hero, who might have been himself, place himself by her side. Instead of this, "a showy man advanced." This was Eglamor, the troubadour. He sang his song, which was received with delighted applause. Sordello felt his heart stir within him; not in vain had been his life of idle dreaming. He saw the imperfection of the poem. He sprang into the place of the singer. He took the same story and retold it. The people recognised the difference: —

> . . . But the people — but the cries,
> The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
> — For he had gained some prize.

He found himself at the feet of Palma, who laid her scarf about his neck. Amidst smiles and congratulations he was escorted to his home. He was told that Eglamor had died of shame at his defeat, and that Palma had chosen him as her minstrel.

No part of the poem is sweeter and tenderer than that which describes the fate of Eglamor. This singer was the precise antithesis to Sordello. His heart was wholly in his song. He had no other dream, no other ambition. His nature was a simple unity. His poetry was commonplace enough, but the spirit of poetry was in it, and the love of all beautiful things. Sordello meets the little train that bears him to his last resting-place. He takes from his own brow his wreath and lays it on the poet's breast.

This whole experience makes a great change in the inner life of Sordello. He has also learned the story that was current of himself. He who had dreamed such great things was simply the son of a poor archer. His ambition narrowed itself. He had a special calling; he was to be a poet. This, however, seemed to him the sum of all lives, for to the poet all lives are open. He passes from one phase of life to another, extracting the beauty and the joy of all. Sordello believed that men would see in him the glory and the possibility of all these lives. Browning, however, throws in a word making a gentle mock of this desire of one who felt himself so exalted above the world to win the recognition and applause of the world that he despised.

We now approach the first grand crisis in the story of Sordello. He is summoned to Mantua to fulfil his task as minstrel. The inspiration was gone. "'T was the song's effect he cared for, scarce the song itself," and we are told that at last the rhymes were Eglamor's. Here we are shown how the life of Sordello was utterly broken up, — distracted by opposing ideals and ambitions. The man part of him and the poet part were at variance; the man part hankered after the actual joys and experiences of life. The poet's art seemed hardly worth the while unless it helped to these. Poetry did not bring the kind of recognition he had hoped for. He had fancied that men would applaud in him the courage and the strength of the hero of whom he sang. Their applause passed over him to

reach the hero whom he had praised. Instead of crying, How great is Sordello, they cried, How great is Montfort, who was the hero of his song.

He refined his language till it became too delicate for his purpose. He elaborated his characters till thought took the place of perception. He cared little for the Mantuans to whom he sang. He found that he had to idealize them as he had done his trees and his flowers. He could not meet them on equal terms. They would come to him with a question.

> A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
> One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
> Itself into a period. . . .

Then he tried to meet them in their own superficial way; but he could not quite hit the mark.

> Weeks, months, years went by,
> And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
> Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
> With each . . .
> But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
> John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
> That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
> A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.

Thus ends the first division of the story. As a poet, he failed because his nature was not in harmony. His ideals clashed. What his heart aspired to, his intellect could not compass. His inclinations and passions dragged him in opposite directions. He felt that he was a failure. On the eve of a festival at which he was to sing he fled and found himself again in the familiar haunts of his youth. At first he enjoyed the quiet and the beauty. It was not, however, quite the old thing. His double consciousness still haunted him.

> He slept, but was aware he slept,
> So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact
> Erst with the overhanging cataract
> To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain
> His own blood's measured clicking at his brain.

He, therefore, welcomed a call to appear again in the world as Palma's minstrel. This leads up to his second great failure. His divided nature had caused failure as a poet. He was now for the same cause to fail as a man.

Having introduced the personality of Sordello, considered as poet, so fully, I shall be able to pass over this portion of the story more rapidly, dwelling only on the final catastrophe of the failure of Sordello considered as man.

As Sordello found himself amid the throng of men, his first sense was that of disappointment. They were not what he had dreamed. How few he saw that were worthy to be chiefs! Then the thought of the people seized him, and a profound sympathy for them filled his soul. He marvelled that in his dreams of ambition he had left them wholly out of the account. He found that the cause of the Guelph, which was the cause of the Pope, was also the people's cause; and a passion took possession of him to build Rome up to a new glory. Summoned to appear before Taurello Salinguerra, whom he met in the presence of Palma, he pleaded with this great Ghibelline chief to take up the Guelph cause, and strike for the Pope and the people. I must confess that his speech, however eloquent, was singularly little fitted to accomplish its end. Finally it was explained by Palma that Sordello was not the son of a poor archer, as he had supposed, but of Salinguerra himself.

Sordello thus found himself in the presence of opportunities to satisfy at once his love and his ambition. He could marry Palma. He could take his place as the leader of the Ghibellines. The world could not have opened more dazzlingly before him. But how about his new-found devotion to the cause of the people? Should he sacrifice the cause which embodied his whole ideal of duty and humanity? Or should he abandon the delight of love, of power, and of the splendours of the world? The badge which represented authority was already laid upon him.

Salinguerra and Palma left him, and he remained alone with his own thoughts.

The sixth and last book of the poem which contains the record of this inner struggle forms the climax of the work. It is pre-eminent for depth of insight and strength of presentation. Though somewhat crude, it is yet, by its dialectic subtlety, not unworthy to stand by the side of 'Bishop Blougram's Apology,' or any other exhibition of psychological subtlety that is found in Browning's more mature works, while it is filled with the very fire and passion of youth.

Sordello looked back over his life. "Every shift and change, effort with counter effort," opened to his gaze. No one of them seemed wrong, except as it checked some other. "The real way seemed made up of all the ways." If only there could have been some overmastering will that should have united the divided forces of his life and have brought them to bear upon some one great end! What he needed was a "soul above his soul," "power to uplift his power," the "moon's control over the sea-depths." But the sky was empty. He had thus been without a function. Others without half his strength attained to the crown of life. Neither Palma's love nor a Salinguerra's hate could master him completely. Should he for this doubt that there was some moon to match his sea?

He seems next to turn the view of life which so often serves as a basis for philanthropy into an argument for his selfishness. I refer to the idea of the community of being, which Schopenhauer presents as the source of love and self-sacrifice. Suppose, he cries, there is no external force such as he had been wishing should control his life. Suppose that he was ordained to be a law to his own sphere. Suppose all other laws seemed foreign only because they were veiled, while really they were manifestations of himself. Suppose the people whom he yearned to help were simply himself presented to himself, why should he feel

bound to sacrifice himself specially for them? "No! All 's himself: all service therefore rates alike."

Yet he would gladly help the people if he could only be sure that he could really help them. If only the true course would open itself plainly before him; if the right and the wrong were only separated more sharply from one another, —

> if one man bore
> Brand upon temples, while his fellow wore
> The aureole, —

all would be easy.

Then he faced as he had never done before the great problem of life. He saw how what we call good is dependent upon what we call evil. Indeed, what would become of good if there were no evil? Faith and courage spring from suffering. Evil is as natural in the world as good. Why, then, should he ruin his life in the attempt to destroy evil, when he would, if he succeeded, destroy also the possibility of good? If suffering were taken from the earth, joy would disappear with it. Joy comes from the enlargement of life; it is an escape. Sordello remembers that he himself, in his early home, where there was only beauty, felt beauty pall upon him. Men are like those who climb a mountain. As they rise, each step opens new grandeur. Once on the mountain top, with "leave to look, not leave to do," the looker would soon be sated. Thus, if he yielded to the impulse to devote himself to the people, he would give what would ruin him, and would not really help them. It will be noticed that here Sordello presents quite accurately the theory of happiness and pain which forms the basis of the pessimism of Schopenhauer. It is that happiness is merely negative, consisting in the removal of unhappiness. When the unhappiness has gone, the happiness has gone with it. So long as one has thirst, what pleasure the water gives! As the thirst is quenched, the water loses its charm.

In the next thought that Sordello utters, he assumes that the world of life is making steady advance toward the heights of peace. The world is moving on; but men travel at different rates of speed. Why should any grudge it to him if he reaches the height of joy a little before the rest?

Then the passion seized him to make the most of this life; to seize what the present offered; not waiting for the chance of something, better perhaps, but belonging to the future.

> Wait not for the late savour, leave untried
> Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
> Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
> Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
> All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
> Upon this Now, which time may reason out
> As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
> But long ere then Sordello will have slipt
> Away.

He would thus live the life that was given him in the present, and trust that in this way he would best prepare himself for that which is to follow.

> Oh life, life-breath,
> Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!
> This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
> But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique.
> Helps? Such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
> Each height, than every depth profoundlier drops?
> Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
> For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
> To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
> The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
> Perchance (so facile was the deed) she chequed
> The void with these materials to affect
> My soul diversely: these consigned anew
> To nought by death, what marvel if she threw
> A second and superber spectacle
> Before it? What may serve for sun, what still
> Wander a moon above me? What else wind
> About me like the pleasures left behind,
> And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
> Cling to me? What 's new laughter? Soothes the fresh

Sleep like sleep? . . .
. . . Oh, 't were too absurd to slight
For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring; wear
Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!

Living the earthly life, it is the earthly life that he would live.

Were heaven to forestall earth, I 'd say
I, is it, must be blest? Then, my own way
Bless me! give firmer arm and fleeter foot,
I 'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute
These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft!
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
Better move palpably through heaven: nor, freed
Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed
'Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in heaven's marge
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,
Made tremulously out in hoary flame!

Then he recalls the martyrs who have borne the most fearful tortures, because the death that he would fly "revealed so oft a better life this life concealed." Their example does not move him, for they saw what he does not see. He exclaims: —

'T was well for them; let me become aware
As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
What masters life disclose itself! Forget
Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
So much is truth to me.

Things, he urges, present different aspects to different persons. Who shall decide that what is true to one is not as really true as that which is true to another? He thus refers to facts which have furnished support to philosophical scepticism as making the attainment of absolute truth impossible. He reasons, however, as Professor Royce has recently done, that these facts taken by themselves would make error impossible. He cries, —

> What Is, then? Since
> One object, viewed diversely, may evince
> Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,
> That way repel, — why gloze upon the fact?
> Why must a single of the sides be right?
> What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
> Where 's abstract Right for me?

As he looked more deeply, he seemed to see that the distinctions of which we make so much might be, after all, merely phenomena that meet us in the present state of being, and have no relation to the absolute truth of things

> The sudden swell
> Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
> Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
> Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
> All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
> Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
> Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
> Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,
> If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
> Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
> With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct
> Quite otherwise. . . .
> . . . Once this understood,
> As suddenly he felt himself alone,
> Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.

He seemed to himself to have discovered that happiness consists in reaching just the equipoise between the soul and the conditions in which it finds itself. One should seek to live the sort of life which can be lived perfectly in this present world. One should attempt a life no larger than can be lived where he is. If this equipoise is preserved in every stage of being, then each stage will be filled out in its turn, and the career of the soul in its successive existences will be one of triumphant success. When, however, the soul undertakes to interfere too much with the concerns of the body, — the word "body" standing for the whole worldly life, — then this existence is spoiled. Something is undertaken which cannot be performed, and the result is a failure.

If the soul in every stage thus strives to anticipate what can be accomplished only in the life that is next to follow, existence will be a long succession of failures. Thus he cries, —

> Let the soul's attempt sublime
> Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
> By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
> And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
> Let the employer match the thing employed,
> Fit to the finite his infinity,
> And thus proceed for ever, in degree
> Changed, but in kind the same, still limited
> To the appointed circumstance and dead
> To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
> Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here;
> Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
> Are like.

The soul, however, as I have intimated, may interfere in such a way as to spoil this balance. It may undertake too much.

> She chose to understand the body's trade
> More than the body's self — had fain conveyed
> Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
> Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —
> Scarcely its minute for enjoying here, —
> The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
> Run o'er its capabilities and wring
> A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
> Which, far from half discovered even, — lo
> The minute gone, the body's power let go
> Apportioned to that joy's acquirement!

Thus does the soul attempt to fill out the weakness of the body from her infinity: —

> And the result is, the poor body soon
> Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
> Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

Must such failure go on for ever? Must life be ever just escaped, which should have been enjoyed, which would have been enjoyed if soul and body had worked harmoniously together, the soul not striving to put more into life

than its finiteness can hold? If the proper relation were preserved, soul and body would be fitted to one another like the heaven and the placid water of the bay in which it is reflected. They would match one another like the two wings of an angel. Thus would each stage of the endless journey be filled with the joy that is its due, —

> But how so order life? Still brutalise
> The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes
> To all that was before, all that shall be
> After this sphere — all and each quality
> Save some sole and immutable Great, Good
> And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood
> To follow? Never may some soul see All
> — The Great Before and After, and the Small
> Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
> And take the single course prescribed before,
> As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
> Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
> But where descry the Love that shall select
> That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
> Nature has plied with all her means, from trees
> And flowers e'en to the Multitude! — and these,
> Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Here the poet intercepts in his own person and speaks of a divine-human revelation that would bring succour and guidance.

> Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
> And speak for you. Of a Power above you still
> Which utterly incomprehensible
> Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
> Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —
> What need! And of . . .
> . . . a Power its representative
> Who, being for authority the same,
> Communication different, should claim
> A course, the first chose and this last revealed —
> This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —
> What utter need!

I am not sure that this last passage does not give what was, in the author's mind, the culmination and the significance of the whole poem. It points to the divine-human

revelation which might bring peace and guidance into the troubled and doubtful lives of men. You may remember that we have already seen that Sordello had felt that the failure of his life had been caused by the lack of some overmastering and directing power. It may help us to understand the importance which this apostrophe had for the poet to remember the longing expressed by the nameless hero of 'Pauline.' After an extremely touching reference to the Christ, he cries: —

> A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
> Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
> But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
> In suffering and poverty and shame,
> Only believing he is not unloved.

However this may be, the apostrophe in 'Sordello' was introduced with marvellous rhetorical skill. It distracts our attention from Sordello at the very moment when his mental struggle reached its crisis. Those without heard a cry. Salinguerra and Palma rushed to the spot: —

> They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil
> Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,
> Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
> A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
> Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
> Help from above in his extreme despair,
> And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
> With short quick passionate cry: as Palma pressed,
> In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
> It beat.

In all this colloquy of Sordello with himself, of which I have given scanty extracts, there is no word which urged the great act of self-sacrifice. We have simply the personal desires encompassing the soul with all the sophistries of the intellect. The heart which discerns the higher and truer course makes no reply. It simply breaks through the toils of the intellect with a mighty effort. It has beaten off the foe, but it was a life-and-death struggle, and

death was the issue. As we read, we have a sense of victory. To the poet it was no victory, but a drawn battle. Of course he was not altogether unmindful of the heroic nature of the struggle. He gave an intimation at the end of the third book that after all we should not find that Sordello was quite as bad as he might appear. You remember, however, the poem entitled 'The Statue and the Bust.' Browning believed in decision and in act. The story of Sordello is that of a life that was wasted by indecision, because it was always attracted by different and irreconcilable ideals. It is the story of a nature, the elements of which were in constant strife; the head and the heart, the ideal and the personal, were always at war within him, and the result was a life that was no life. The poet has no word of congratulation in regard to what to us seems a spiritual triumph. He describes the wretched condition in which things were left at the death of Sordello, the ignoble strifes, the petty but destructive ambitions, the warring factions that occupied the scene, till we feel that it might have been better if Sordello had worn the badge, and taken the position to which he had been born. All the trace that he left behind him was found in the fragment of a song which a boy sang as he climbed the hills.

I have tried simply to give some hints of this story of a soul. Of the brilliant picturing of contemporary life I have said nothing, nor of the historical allusions, which sometimes tax our power of comprehension. The few characters that figure in the story are for the most part well defined and sharply drawn by a few touches of a master's hand. There is Ecelin, the head of the Ghibelline party, crafty, cruel, and weak; who needed to be continually braced up by Adelaide, his wife, and who at her death sought refuge in a monastery to make atonement for his many sins. There is Adelaide, the possessor of magical gifts, hated and feared. There is Taurello Salinguerra, the bluff, good-natured soldier, who preferred to be second

when he might have been the first. There is Naddo, the genius hunter and haunter, the superficial and conventional critic, who seemed to worship a poet, but would not for the world that his son should be a poet. There is Eglamor, the sweet singer, whose life all went into his commonplace songs, and who died of grief at his defeat. Palma, I am sorry to say, cannot be placed among these clearly marked characters. To tell the truth, she is little more than a lay figure, or, more properly perhaps, a succession of lay figures. There is a very pretty picture of her in her young girlhood; but this is rather Sordello's fancy than the real Palma. Later, when Sordello met her for a confidential talk, we read: —

> But when she felt she held her friend indeed
> Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant her lessons.

This fling of the curls makes us think of a gay young thing, or a sentimental damsel, as perhaps she was. Then she explained that while Sordello was aspiring to mastery she had been longing for some power that should take command of her life; and this aspiration is very prettily related. It seems, too, that she had chosen Sordello as he had chosen her. Later, however, when the occasion offered itself, she did not hesitate to take, nominally at least, the position of commander-in-chief of the Ghibelline forces, and to assume the practical direction of Sordello himself. Once she unexpectedly appears to Sordello, in the night, in the midst of the crowd that thronged the streets. I fear that her longing for some master-spirit to control her life was rather sentimental than real. There is no evidence that Sordello's affection for her was very profound. Considered as a love-story, it must be confessed that the poem is a failure. The power that created Pippa and Mildred, Anael and Colombe, seems not yet to have been aroused. It is, however, not at all as a love-story that the poem should be regarded. It is, as Browning himself tells us,

the story of the "Development of a soul," and to this everything else is subsidiary.

There is an extremely interesting passage at the end of the third book, in which the poet breaks loose from his story and appears in his own person, musing on a ruined palace-step at Venice. This passage, extending over some dozen pages, is not always of the clearest, but has for me a great fascination. One point in it has a special interest, as possibly throwing light upon the poet's interest in his dramatic creations. The poet touches upon the problem of evil. He says: —

> Ask moreover, when they prate
> Of evil men past hope, "Don't each contrive,
> Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —
> Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
> His own conceit of truth? to which he hies
> By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
> But to himself not inaccessible;
> He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
> Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed
> His vilest wrong, empowered the losel clutch
> One pleasure from a multitude of such
> Denied him.

This inner self-justification of every life would appear to be that which especially interests Browning in the portrayal of the widely different characters which he presents to us. It is this inner life, the way in which every man appears to himself, which, if I understand the passage aright, is what the "Makers see" are to reveal to the world.

We may take in connection with this a very curious passage which was written by Browning on the fly-leaf of a copy of 'Pauline':

"'Pauline' . . . written in pursuance of a foolish plan I forget, or have no wish to remember, involving the assumption of several distinct characters: the world was never to guess that such an opera, such a comedy, such a speech proceeded from

the same notable person. . . . Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in my Fool's Paradise."[1]

Although Browning here speaks so slightingly of this scheme, it seems to indicate what was to be the work of his life. He was to represent in the first person the most widely different characters; while the quotation that I just made from 'Sordello' would seem to show the spirit in which this was to be done and the inspiring motive. It is pleasant to see at the very beginning of his career its entire course so distinctly foreshadowed.

In conclusion it may be asked what has the Sordello of Browning to do with the Sordello of history? What may we suppose to have impelled the poet to take this character and make him the hero of this tale? Students of Browning have taken great pains to search out all that can be known of the original Sordello. Mr. Cooke, in his 'Guidebook,' sums up the result of these investigations thus: "Sordello lived during the first part of the thirteenth century; and he was a poet, a troubadour, a soldier by profession, and a politician of some ability. Little is now known about him, and that little is much obscured by tradition and legend." Mr. Cooke suggests that "it is probable that two persons have in some way been mixed together in the accounts given of him." The most interesting thing in regard to him is the admiration with which Dante speaks of him. Perhaps the most important fact of his life is one which Dante commemorates; namely, that in his poems he did much toward the formation of the Tuscan tongue. When we survey these meagre results, the difficulty of understanding in what way this hardly known personage fascinated Browning seems, at first sight, greater than ever.

I think that the inspiration which came to Browning sprang out of this very meagreness. In Sordello he found

[1] See Cooke's Browning Guidebook, page 286.

a man of great genius. If he had not been such, Dante would not so have honoured him. He was a man who excelled in poetry, in war, and in diplomacy. He was one of the creators of the magnificent Tuscan speech. Yet so far as his personality was concerned, how little record has he left of himself! A few poems remain, which the commentators try to understand, and to guess what power they may have had for those who first heard them. We have thus a splendid personality and small accomplishment. May it not be that he frittered his strength away in these various pursuits, each of which had a certain interest for him? May it not be that in his effort to refine his language he took from it something of its force? May it not be that, standing as he did in the early days of the Renaissance in which the spirits of men were impelled in various directions and were attracted by different ideals, his own spirit lost its unity, and that, thus distracted, his life found no worthy expression? Out of such questionings I conceive that the Sordello of Browning drew its suggestion and its inspiration.

THE CLASSICAL ELEMENT IN BROWNING'S POETRY.

By WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, Dec. 31, 1895.]

As a whole, our English poetry has been more deeply influenced by antiquity, in closer sympathy with the loftiest spirits of both Greece and Rome, than has perhaps any other modern national school. Several of our poets — Milton, Gray, Swinburne — have been themselves really learned Grecians. Browning's great contemporary, Tennyson, called his first Arthurian idyll "weak Homeric echoes," and Tennyson has really more reminiscences of Homer than of Shakespeare, shows more clearly the effect of Virgil or Theocritus than even of Milton. Browning himself was the son of one classical scholar — and the husband of another. He was lulled to sleep as a child in his father's library with the Greek verses of Anacreon (or rather the Anacreontics, we suspect). If we interpret the poem 'Development' literally, he began Greek by his eighth year, and read Homer through as soon as he had "ripened somewhat," which would hardly point beyond his twelfth summer. Indeed he speaks of himself as "the all-accomplished scholar" at that age: mockingly of course, but indicating that he really had finished the 'Iliad,' at least. Certainly Browning as a young student must have been fully acquainted with the best Greek and Roman poets in their own speech. 'Balaustion,' however, his first important essay in translation, appeared in the poet's

sixtieth year. If we examine the whole body of his work up to that time, we shall find surprisingly little of direct allusion, even, to classical themes and persons.

The explanation for this is not altogether evident or simple. It is not, indeed, likely that the boy fell under the influence of any teacher in England, seventy years ago, who could adequately reveal to him the full beauty and meaning, the manifold illumination of life and art, to be discovered in Sophocles, or Pindar, or Lucretius. Yet his affection for Homer, for Ovid, and some others, is unmistakable.

But the very perfection, the rounded completeness of an 'Odyssey,' or an 'Antigone,' set their creators farther away from the eager, struggling, throbbing heart of the young Browning.

> What 's come to perfection perishes,

he cries.

> They are perfect — how else ? they shall never change:
> We are faulty — why not ? we have time in store.

It is unnecessary to multiply citations from the poem 'Old Pictures in Florence,' where this thought is copiously illustrated.

Then again, though the Greek drama could not (or would not) portray violent action in realistic fashion (as Horace puts it, "Let not Medea slay her children before the people," but behind the scenes), yet nearly all the ancient poets depict men and women acting, or at least talking. Even when an Homeric hero is utterly alone, he does n't ponder in silence a complex thought, but "Thus he *speaks* — to his own stout heart" (*e. g.* 'Odyssey,' V. 355). One monologue in 'Paracelsus,' moreover, perhaps excels in length all the soliloquies of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' combined. True, there is a famous soliloquy in the 'Medea' itself (vss. 764–810), but it is in reality a thrilling dialogue — between the loving mother and the woman scorned — and we listen, eager to know which will

conquer and determine her *action*. Moreover, the women of the chorus are present, and are at one point directly appealed to (line 797, *φίλαι*).

In one sense Browning is objective enough, too. He did not merely, as the young Longfellow bade, "look into" his own "heart and write." Porphyria's lover is not young Browning, nor even one impulse of his given free rein, but a *madman*, of whom the poet was making an exhaustive study — one of the thousand hearts into whose uttermost depths he gazed, and found that which he recorded. Yet it is man thinking and feeling, the inner life and growth, that always drew his eye. "My stress," he says, "lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so." This, from the dedication of 'Sordello' in 1863, nearly a quarter-century after its first appearance, is really the key to almost all his work.

But that simple phrase about the "development of a soul" could probably not have been made intelligible at all to any of the earlier Greek poets, at least. They hardly felt, even, in regard to a living man, the dualism implied in our "body and soul." What faith in immortality they had grew out of their delight in this physical life, and was but a pale reflection of it in the Unknown (*vide e. g.* 'Odyssey,' XI. 488–91), quite the reverse of the eager confidence in higher reaches of soul-life, voiced so gloriously in 'Prospice.' It may be doubted if any Greek before Socrates could have understood such words about Death as —

> A battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
> The reward of it all.

No early Hellenic poet would have said even —

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be.
> The last of life, for which the first was made.
> *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

It is necessary to emphasise some of these diversities. It is almost too hackneyed to call Browning a Gothic man, but it is irresistibly true. The typical Greek loved life for its own sweet sake, fully enjoyed it, wished it no other, only unending. Browning, as another great Englishman has frankly confessed, could not have endured heaven itself under such conditions. Struggle, ascent, growth, were sweet to him. To be still learning was better than to know.

The very architecture of the Greeks, the level architrave, the steadfast columns, the completeness, simplicity, and restfulness of the outlines, the due subordination of every detail to the general effect — all this wearies and cramps the true Gothic mind. (They were no Vandals who more than once muttered to me under Attic skies that the Acropolis was the eye-sore of Athens!)

Probably most of us sympathise somewhat with this half-rebellion against Classicism. "Nature is Gothic, too," said a fearless woman the other day. Something of the turmoil and complexity of life, as much as possible of its discontent and aspiration, we crave to see echoed in our art. The struggling spire — even Giotto's unfinished tower — uplift the soul, with the eye, higher than the eagle of the Hellenic pediment ever soared.

The clearest evidence that Browning resisted, so to speak, the alien influence of Greek art is afforded by the fragment called 'Artemis Prologizes.' Upon the proof he wrote: "The above is nearly all retained of a tragedy I composed much against my endeavour, while in bed with a fever two years ago. It went farther into the story of Hippolytus and Aricia; but when I got well, putting only thus much down at once, I soon forgot the remainder." The one hundred and twenty or so verses are a single speech of Artemis in the Euripidean manner. The best of it is a fine account of Hippolytos' disaster, transcribed rather freely from the messenger's speech in the Greek

play. Now, this undertaking was not to be in essence a mere translation at all, but would have worked out a feature of the myth not alluded to by Euripides, — probably not known to him, — namely, the resuscitation of the dead prince Hippolytos by the goddess Artemis, and his mad love for one of her attendant nymphs. This resuscitation, it will be noticed, is akin to the chief *motif* in 'Alkestis.' And yet, with returning health, his own independent tastes asserted themselves, and this project was abandoned altogether. All this occurred about 1841.

In their flowing rhythm and easy construction these verses are much more Euripidean than some of the later attempts. But as his full vigour revived, Browning, at twenty-nine, could no longer remain submissive, even in forms, to the restraints of classicism. He loved the fragment — as Goethe did his but-begun 'Achilleid,' for he included it in his volume of selections which best illustrated his own development. But neither Goethe nor Browning found time in a long life to complete what he had begun.

The unquestioned culmination of Mr. Browning's career is 'The Ring and the Book.' Unless our multiplication is greatly at fault, that contains nearly twenty-four thousand lines, or just about as much as the entire body of nineteen Greek tragedies by Euripides still extant. Its action might possibly have sufficed for *one*, after the manner of the 'Medea.' That world-famous masterpiece contains *fourteen hundred* lines, or about one-third as much as 'Fifine at the Fair,' less verses by far than are devoted to one of Browning's Americans: 'Mr. Sludge the Medium.' In choice of subjects, in the point of view from which he studied them, and in the mass and measure of treatment, Browning was pre-eminently un-Greek, unclassical.

It appears likely, then, that when Browning's own creative activity began in earnest, his Greek studies, almost immediately, seemed but far-away, beautiful pictures from

his student-past: rarely coming near the fields in which he worked.

In 'Pauline,' the speaker says: —

> Old delights
> Had flocked like birds again;

and the first of these fleeting memories is of

> that king
> Treading the purple calmly to his death,

that is, the splendid tragic figure of the home-returning Agamemnon. It is worth noting that to this, the earliest of his classical allusions, Browning returned nearly a half-century later for his last great essay in translation. The far more vivid and tender allusion to Andromeda, on a later page of 'Pauline,' was inspired by no classical poet — not even Ovid (who was apparently closer to Browning's heart than almost any Greek) — but by an actual picture, an engraving after Caravaggio.[1] 'Pauline' contains also one of Browning's rare allusions to Sophocles: —

> Or I will read great lays to thee — how she,
> The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave
> With power to love and to be loved and live.

(Cf. Sophocles' 'Antigone,' 819–23.) There is perhaps one "weak Homeric echo" in 'Pauline,' if the lotus-eaters are glimpsed at in the lines —

> And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,
> And the crew wandered in its bowers and plucked
> Its fruits and gave up all their hopes of home.

But how slight is this compared with the poem of Tennyson, which fairly wrests the subject out of the hands of Homer *poeta sovrano!*

In 'Paracelsus,' even such allusions are rarer still, despite the scholastic atmosphere. The remotest of myths is used once, to point a moral Hesiod hardly saw: —

[1] G. W. Cooke, 'Browning Guidebook,' p. 288; cf. Ovid, 'Metamorphoses,' IV. 672–5.

> We get so near — so very, very near!
> 'T is an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,
> Not when they set about their mountain piling,
> But when another rock would crown the work.

Then after a similar glance at the tale of Phaethon — probably once more betraying Ovid as the source of the remembrance — the muttering dreamer dismisses the thought in the words, "all old tales!"

The name of Apollo occurs with curious persistency on the pages of 'Sordello,' but it seems to be but part of the hero's own half-morbid passion for supremacy in his art. The definite echoes we can detect are apt to be after Ovid or Horace, *e. g.*: —

> Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
> Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
> Sufficed.

(Cf. Horace, Odes, II. 10, 17–20.)

But these are mere faint figures of speech at best. With how different a hand does Mr. Browning sketch in his mediæval detail, though he does declare that it "was purposely of no more importance than a background requires."

> May Boniface be duly damned for this!
> Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
> From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
> His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth.

Such drawing as this, or the 'Ordering of the Tomb at St. Praxed's,' could only be attained by one who had completely and lovingly immersed himself in the very spirit of that alien age. To most of us the Hellas of the fifth or fourth century is infinitely nearer and more intelligible than the Lombardy of Eccelino Romano and Azzo of Este. If it be asked whether Browning in his prime ever depicted that Hellenic life, 'Cleon' will probably be mentioned, which was written in 1855. But not even Cleon himself — much less his friend the tyrant — is drawn

from life. The colour, the background, is vivid and beautiful, but cannot be localised anywhere. The all-accomplished Cleon, who shapes epics and folk-song, sculptures the sun-god and paints the Stoa, writes inventively on music and destructively on psychology, even if Greek at all, is so utterly a character of the Decadence that he seems almost nearer to Michael Angelo than to Phidias. The main lesson of the poem, if I grasp its meaning, is that every thoughtful pagan was a bewildered pessimist: and this doctrine (which I am most reluctant to accept) is enforced with arguments as modern as they are subtle, in a style no Greek ever wrote, or could have understood.

'Balaustion's Adventure' appeared, as we said, in the poet's sixtieth year. It includes a paraphrase, often interrupted, of nearly the entire 'Alkestis.' The metre is blank verse throughout. Four years later Browning printed a second Adventure of Balaustion, called 'Aristophanes' Apology,' in which the Euripidean tragedy, 'Heracles Mad,' is recited in an episode by the Rhodian girl, but without interruption. The choral odes are, moreover, rhymed. Finally, two years later still, the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylos, commanded, he says, by Thomas Carlyle, was published as a translation pure and simple, with merely a brief prose preface in which he claims the merit of absolute literalness.

These are our chief landmarks, and they clearly show that it was only very gradually and, as it were, accidentally, that Mr. Browning became a translator, even in his old age. It is difficult to imagine him assuming patiently and for long periods the attitude of a merely passive interpreter, as Longfellow did so contentedly till all the hundred cantos of the 'Commedia' were faithfully Englished, line for line. As a matter of fact, the 'Alkestis' version is but part — indeed, hardly a third in total amount — of an eager, subtle, and far-reaching argument, a far deeper psychological study than Euripides ever dreamed of! The

second poem, 'Aristophanes' Apology,' is four times as long as any extant Greek tragedy.

It was not strange that Browning was attracted to Euripides, and felt him to be among all the great ancient poets the most modern, or, as Mrs. Browning had called him,

> Euripides
> The human, with his droppings of warm tears.

Euripides, like Mr. Browning himself, was a bold innovator. Both used the dramatic form for materials, and in a spirit which their conservative contemporaries angrily stigmatised as undramatic. It is indeed difficult to imagine all the monologues of 'Paracelsus' tolerated at full length in any theatre. So Aristophanes ridiculed Euripides, particularly ('The Frogs,' *passim*, especially vss. 1182–1247), for his long prologues and messengers' descriptions.

Still, the Greek poet is almost always, at least, describing actions, not merely emotions. Balaustion — that is, Mr. Browning — constantly interrupts the speakers in the 'Alkestis,' and chiefly to tell, sometimes at great length, what they are *thinking* about. For instance, to the slave who has entertained Heracles with such ill grace, *seventy* (extra-Euripidean) lines are devoted, in order to make clear why his shallow mind misliked, and failed to recognise, the hero.

When we chance to be in full agreement with this additional chorus, as we may call it, it is thoroughly enjoyable. Thus for every word of contempt poured on the selfish and cowardly Admetos, all thanks. Even Professor Moulton's persuasiveness can make no hero of him! On the other hand, Mr. Browning has seized upon Heracles as the chief heroic figure, and has lavished upon him a wealth and splendour of description and eulogy that quite overwhelm the slight sketch in the Greek original. This has been very fully set forth by Professor Verrall in his recent

book, 'Euripides the Rationalist.' Whatever Euripides' artistic purpose may have been, his title itself points out decisively the truly central character, the heroine of the play. Heracles seems unmistakably a comic figure in great part. His voracity and drunkenness help more than aught else to explain why this piece was performed *fourth* in Euripides' tetralogy, in the place of the regular farcical afterpiece with chorus of satyrs, of which the 'Cyclops' is the only extant example. Professor Verrall, indeed, believes that the drama as a whole was chiefly planned to destroy all belief in the death and resurrection of Alkestis. He thinks every intelligent listener perceived, if he did not share, the poet's belief that Alkestis merely swooned from nervousness under the delusion of a doom appointed her, and that Heracles found her recovering as naturally as Juliet.

Professor Verrall's ingenious argument will hardly convince those who, despite all the incongruities and distressing silences of the little play, have learned, with Milton, to love the heroic wife and mother. That we all wish the drama somewhat other, or more, than it is, may be frankly confessed. Above all, no one would grudge Admetos a scene in which he should be reluctantly convinced by his queen that it is as clearly his duty to live for his people as it is her privilege to die for him. We are unable to "supply it from the context," or calmly take it for granted as self-evident.

On the whole, Browning (who is Balaustion) perhaps holds a brief for Euripides as compared with his two less-criticised brethren. Still, he not only goes on, nominally under the Greek poet's inspiration, to sketch out at the close his own radically different treatment of the theme, in which Alkestis drives the hard but irrevocable bargain with Apollo beforehand, without her husband's knowledge; but both here and once before (when the chorus fails to show Admetos and his father that they are both alike

ignoble), it is confessed that Sophocles would have guided the action more worthily.

It may be mentioned here that very near the end of his life Mr. Browning composed a sort of Prologue in Heaven for the 'Alkestis': a dialogue between Apollo and the Fates. The Greek element in this poem is not large.

To sum up, then: Mr. Browning's keen, alert critical powers have thrown many a brilliant cross-light on this perplexing little drama — his descriptions of Death, of Heracles, and other passages are splendid creative poetry in themselves — but it is impossible to accept his version of the Greek play as a finality. Indeed his own preference would doubtless have been to arouse and interest rather than to satisfy a passive circle of disciples. He tells us so plainly, taking his own place among —

> poets, the one royal race
> That ever was, or will be, in this world!
> They give no gift that bounds itself and ends
> I' the giving and the taking.

He bids us all —

> share the poet's privilege,
> Bring forth new good, new beauty, from the old.

There are many little wilfulnesses of expression, largely due to an intermittent struggle for absolute literalness; *e. g.* the first three Greek words, Ὦ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει are rendered "O Admeteian domes." Neither the word *dome* nor the plural form can be defended on English soil. Indeed there were no domes in Euripides' time, much less in Admetos' day. Such a method would make Antigone hail her kinswoman in the first verse of Sophocles' masterpiece: "O common self-sistered Ismene's head"! But Browning, happily, forgets such pedantries, for the most part, in the delight of a poet who is interpreting a poet.

The favourite Browningesque forms "o' the," "i' the," etc., are not noticeably frequent in these versions. They are no doubt due largely to the overcrowding of Brown-

ing's own lines with weighted thought, and this pressure is naturally less felt in translation. Moreover, though no chronological study of the appearance and growth of this trick in Browning's style is known to me, I have always supposed that it developed not under Greek but Italian influence, and was an effort to emulate the tempting *del*, *al*, *dal*, etc.: "del bel paese dove il si suona." See especially the 'Stornelli' in 'Fra Lippo Lippi': "Flower o' the broom," "Flower o' the clove," etc.

Browning's transliteration of Greek names caused much angry and excited discussion. Few even among professional scholars, in work intended only for learned readers, have ever gone so far toward literalness. His ending *-os* and *-on*, *-oi* and *-ai*, his persistent use of *k*, even where *c* would have the same sound, all this gained few adherents — and of those few some have gradually back-slidden into the more familiar forms. ("And in that number am I found, myself," as Dante's Virgil puts it!)

Two points only I will make in passing. First, any word once well known and fixed in English literature escapes from the power of scholars to mar or to correct. *Aigospotamoi* may be, perhaps, successfully taught to another generation, but *Athenai* for Athens, never.

And, secondly, Browning's rejection of *y*, and substitution of *u*, in words like *Pnyx*, *Thucydides*, *Æschylus*, etc., is a sin against the very accuracy he sought. The Greeks used at will, for this one vowel, two forms, quite like our V and Y. The simpler V only was taken over in the early Roman alphabet, and eventually differentiated into our V and U. In Homeric Greek it probably had everywhere the sound of *oo* in *moon*. In Roman speech that value for U has remained unaltered down to the present moment. But in Greek this vowel later underwent exactly the same modification as in French (or as the '*u* with umlaut' in German). In order to represent this modified or 'broken' Greek *U* accurately in transliterating Greek

names — and for no other purpose whatsoever — the Romans borrowed 'upsilon' a second time, with the form Y. The Greek name and value are still retained in various modern languages. This 'breaking' of *U* did not extend to the Greek diphthongs ΟΥ, ΑΥ, ΕΥ. Indeed, ΟΥ assumed in Attic Greek, and has kept ever since, the original or 'unbroken' phonetic value of early Υ.

So, when Cicero transliterated ΘΟΥΚΥΔΙΔΗΣ as *Thucydides*, he represented every sound of the Greek word with painful accuracy. Browning writes *Thoukudides*. The *k* can be defended, since we would no longer give *c* the sound intended. The unlovely *ou* in the first syllable does no harm, unless it mislead any to pronounce as in *thou*. But the *u* in the second syllable certainly suggests the sound of *could*, or else of *cud*, which is much farther from the truth *kŭd* than is our *kid* (or *Cid*). But enough, surely, of such philological quiddities! The little I had to offer of carping criticism on details is intentionally disposed of thus early, that our discussion of Browning's later work may proceed upon larger lines.

The criticisms, good and bad, upon his 'Balaustion' evidently drove Browning to a far more exhaustive study of the entire field covered by Greek drama. 'Aristophanes' Apology' (1875) is a remarkably learned work, which 'Balaustion' (1871) is not. Already in 'Fifine' (published in 1872) we find a line (='Prometheus,' 116), and again a phrase (from 'Prometheus,' 518), out of Æschylos' 'Prometheus' quoted — dragged in, good sooth — in English letters! The myth followed by Euripides in his 'Helen' (that only a phantom of the famous beauty was carried away by Paris and fought for so long) is beautifully told — for its own sake, again, rather than for any especial appropriateness — in the course of the same most unHellenic poem.[1] Other similar indications in verse written during this Olympic period 1871–1875 could be named.

[1] This turn of the Helen-myth is traced to Stesichoros. See Plato, 'Phædrus,' 243 A.

All "this learning is," however, as Mr. Symonds has well said (*Academy*, April 17, 1875), "lightly borne" in the 'Apology.' It is indeed all built, by a great constructive and imaginative poet, into a grand dramatic scene. The first adventure of Balaustion, in the Syracusan harbour, was a beautiful invention, and the thousands of pallid-faced Athenian captives, the wreck of that glorious expedition which had left Athens stripped of wealth and men, formed a background at once tragic and historical. Infinitely more impressive, however, is this later dialogue, when the Long Walls themselves seem already tottering, and the fleet of Lysander hovers like a black shadow in the offing. This gives a bitter mockery to Aristophanes' words of braggadocio, when he claims that his comedies have led the Athenians to accept wisely the blessings of honourable peace: —

> Such was my purpose: it succeeds, I say!
> Have not we beaten Kallikratidas?
> Not humbled Sparta? Peace awaits our word.
> My after-counsels scarce need fear repulse.
> Athenai, taught prosperity has wings,
> Cages the glad recapture.
> Demos . . . sways and sits
> Monarch of Hellas! Ay, and sage again,
> No longer jeopardises chieftainship.

From such dreams the awakening was to be bitter indeed!

That Browning is, in this great scene, just to Aristophanes, whom he hates, and only just to Euripides, whom he reveres, few will contend. Indeed, many untimely concessions and self-contradicting boasts are put into the half-drunken comedian's mouth, which too often remind us that he who works the wires detests his puppet. (For those who quail at the entire dialogue, a briefer test of the treatment accorded to Aristophanes may be seen in the outline Balaustion gives of his masterpiece, 'The Frogs.')

Still, the scene is nobly and imaginatively planned and executed. Let us recall it in brief outline. The tidings

of Euripides' death, and the aged Sophocles' entrance with the command that his own next chorus shall appear in mourning for his rival, have interrupted the festive supper with which Aristophanes and his crew celebrate the success of his comedy, the 'Thesmophoriazousai,' wherein the great departed poet himself had been "monkeyed to heart's content that morning." Half sobered to regret, and half defiant, the master of the revels now leads his troop to storm the hospitable doors of Rhodian Balaustion and her Phocian husband, the two known even in Athens as Euripides' stanchest admirers. Here, deserted by his timid band, Aristophanes alone withstands the wondering eyes of

> Statuesque Balaustion pedestalled
> On much disapprobation,

and makes defence, rather than apology, for his art.

Perhaps it is irreverent to desire that the gifts of gods, or Titans, were other than they are. Else we would dare wish Browning had actually given us here a dramatic form, if only, as 'In a Balcony,' without change of scene; and we will add, yet more audaciously, something of Hellenic restraint and limitation would not have injured it. *One* of Aristophanes' speeches is longer than the whole Greek drama of 'Alkestis,' and Balaustion's reply — a young matron's to a midnight reveller — quite equals the entire dialogue of the same Greek play, apart from the choral songs. Into a really dramatic Apology such as is here imagined, the version of an entire Greek tragedy could hardly have been thrust; but at least the fine choral ode in the 'Heracles Mad,' glancing at all the hero's chief exploits, might still have been utilised quite as effectively as is, in the actual poem of Browning, the beautiful fragment from the 'Kresphontes,' on the blessedness of peace.

Much of the whole argument in 'Aristophanes' Apology' is so abstruse, so rapid, so allusive, that it needs more comment and elucidation than any Hellenic tragedy or

Pindaric ode. Such a comment it should some day have, for here, in rugged verse, is much of the best literary criticism Greek drama has ever received. Thus three lines sum up Euripides' main purpose better than Mr. Verrall's heavy volume: —

> Because Euripides shrank not to teach,
> If gods be strong and wicked, man, though weak,
> May prove their match by willing to be good.

The action of the Athenians, in fining Phrynichos for reminding them in drama of their own folly and of recent loss, has waited twenty-four centuries for this couplet to give the *coup de grâce*: —

> Ah my poor people, whose prompt remedy
> Was — fine the poet, not reform thyself!

Yet this poem as a whole, a mine of wealth to scholars, full of thrilling inspiration to the poetic soul, is, I fully believe, a sealed book, a hopelessly bolted gate, to the average reader. He must answer "No" when Browning asks: —

> May not looks be told,
> Gesture made speech, and speech so amplified
> That words find bloodwarmth which, coldwrit, they lose?

Still, the classical student may well keep the volume open upon his drawing-room table, with scores of the lines marked for the stranger's casual eye to catch upon. When was the death of the triumphant artist ever so nobly announced?

> "Speak good words!" Much misgiving faltered I.
> "Good words, the best, Balaustion! He is crowned,
> Gone with his Attic ivy home to feast,
> Since Aischulos required companionship.
> Pour a libation for Euripides!"

Even the hint of Shakespeare, if it is he, as the future master who shall combine all the chords of tragedy and comedy, is not too broad, and does no violence to the probabilities. Indeed, Plato's 'Symposium' culminates (223 D) in nearly the same thought.

The consummate stroke of genius, in building up this plot, was the identification of Balaustion's husband with that unnamed Phocian who, as Plutarch says ('Life of Lysander,' § XV), saved helpless Athens by aptly quoting, in the angry council of her victors, a passage from Euripides' 'Electra.'[1] This makes a magnificent response of destiny to Aristophanes' freshly-remembered boast. Not he, but dead Euripides, through the lips of his two faithful adherents, snatches for Athens the only peace and rest she can possibly obtain in her utter failure and wreck.

Of course, with all its accurate and wide-gathered learning, 'Aristophanes' Apology' is not precisely a safe source of information on the detailed history of Attic drama. Most of Aristophanes' words are deliberately distorted from the truth as Browning sees it. The counter-argument is sometimes only less partial in the other direction. Of actual slips, or even Homeric nods, on Browning's part, very few have been noted; but certainly not

> Once and only once, trod stage,
> Sang and touched lyre in person, in his youth,
> Our Sophokles, — youth, beauty, dedicate
> To Thamuris who named the Tragedy.

That story of Sophocles' dramatic appearance is well authenticated, but no better than another, which interests me far more. He appeared[2] also in 'Nausicaa, or the Washers,' and won great applause by his skilful dancing and ball-play in the character of — Nausicaa herself! That this also was in his beardless youth is more than probable. Again, it is asserted that Euripides "doled out" but five satyr-dramas. Seven or eight were extant in Alexandrian times, and there is no reason to think he ever omitted the comic afterpiece, unless the 'Alkestis' be accounted such an exception. Browning apparently overlooked the fact that comparatively few satyr-dramas were preserved even

[1] 'Electra,' 166–67. The rendering is very free.
[2] *Vide* Nauck, 'Frag. Trag. Græc,' [2] p. 228.

in Aristarchus' day. Perhaps there was not in every case a literary text at all.

Between the 'Alkestis,' as incrusted in the early Balaustion poem, and the 'Heracles Mad,' which the young Rhodian matron (against all the probabilities) now recites entire to the unwearied reveller before the long, sleepless night is over — the link between these two translations, I say, is found in these words: —

> The sweet and strange Alkestis, which saved me,
> . . . ends nowise, to my mind,
> In pardon of Admetos. Hearts are fain
> To follow cheerful weary Herakles
> Striding away from the huge gratitude,
> Bound on the next new labour "height o'er height
> Ever surmounting — destiny's decree!"
> Thither He helps us: that 's the story's end!

For myself, I still believe Euripides named his drama aright, the 'Alkestis.' In order to create there an adequate hero, Browning has put into his own poem of 'Balaustion,' as Mr. Verrall clearly points out, several magnificent descriptions of Heracles, digressions upon his heroism and his exploits — in short, an overwhelming mass of material which only a poet can find between the lines of Euripides' brief and slight melodrama. With that method of viewing the 'Alkestis' he is here imperially consistent.

The 'Heracles Mad,' too, answers better to such an introduction as this than any other extant tragedy would have done; but by no means perfectly — though Balaustion calls it "the perfect piece," as she begins the recital. It is, indeed, largely filled with the praises of Heracles. The first half, however, describing his return from Hades, prompt rescue of his wife and children, and vengeance on the murderous King Lycos, would have been more effective than the whole.

When *Frenzy*, led thither reluctant by Iris at Hero's bidding, comes, in the moment of his triumph, and turns

the hero's hand against those very sons whose lives he has just saved — it is hard to see any sequence in such a plot. Not only are these gods "strong and wicked," but the poet here as elsewhere seems really to have a secondary purpose, namely, to raise a doubt whether such gods can really exist at all. We join in Heracles' cry: —

> Who would pray
> To such a goddess? — that begrudging Zeus
> Because he loved a woman, ruins me, —
> Lover of Hellas, faultless of the wrong!

If Browning felt, in Euripides' art, any such subtle double purpose — the agnostic philosopher staying the dramatist's hand — it would only attract the more the most subtle of all poets. That such casuistry is effectively dramatic, however, will hardly be maintained. This most powerful, perverse, and perplexing tragedy, 'Heracles Mad,' Browning has rendered with unflinching literalness. Where Mr. Coleridge, in his excellent prose version, dilutes Heracles' line upon the ingratitude of the Thebans whom he had saved of old: —

μάχας δὲ Μινυῶν, ἃς ἔτλην, ἀπέπτυσαν;

into. "Do they make so light of my hard warring with the Minyæ?" Browning gives us the coarse, rugged truth: "The Minuæ-wars I waged — they spat forth these?" Sometimes this very literalness in words leads the reader far astray, as when mention of "skipping beyond the Atlantic bounds" occurs in the Greek text and is echoed without comment.

The choral songs are translated in rhymed verses of various lengths and irregular sequences, with no attempt to preserve any Greek movement — not even the pairing of stanzas in strophe and antistrophe. In these rhymed passages, of course, *absolute* literalness cannot be demanded, nor attained. Yet Browning, who in easy mastery of rhyme is perhaps the superior even of Rückert, often

achieves the impossible. The little detail he has added is rarely modern or in any way un-Hellenic. Indeed, the minute faithfulness and self-suppression of this task must have been most irksome to a nature so alert and self-moved. If, as before, he felt that Sophocles, or himself, could have carried the plot to a fitter issue, it is nowhere indicated, nor glanced at by a word. Even when the long recitation is done, Aristophanes himself, *advocatus diaboli* though he is, hardly hints at any flaw in "the perfect piece."

We are, however, conscious that Browning, or his lovely Balaustion, holds no brief, this time, upon the whole, for Euripides alone, but rather for the great tragic trio among whom death has just made all rivalry impossible; or, again, for the nobler, serious art, against lawlessness, obscenity, mere catering to the vulgar taste, as personified (not with impartial justice) in the greatest comic poet of all time, Aristophanes. Though the first quotation that occurs, early, in the 'Apology' is from the Euripidean 'Heraclidæ,' it is hardly approved by the speaker.[1] A few lines later a splendid figure reminds us naturally of Æschylus' greatest trilogy: —

> Memories asleep, as, at the altar foot,
> Those Furies in the Oresteian song.

And presently we have the masters of tragedy all worthily grouped: —

> What hinders that we treat this tragic theme
> As the Three taught when either woke some woe,
> — How Klutaimnestra hated, what the pride
> Of Iokasté, why Medeia clove
> Nature asunder —

[1] Or didst thou sigh
Rightly with thy Makaria? "After life,
Better no sentiency than turbulence;
Death cures the low contention." Be it so!
Yet progress means contention, to my mind.

This seems to give the essence of Macaria's last words. Cf. Eurip. 'Heracles,' vss. 591-96; but the version is a very free one!

The choice of three impious women as types may merely indicate how much there was in common, after all, in the three masters.

We should hardly be surprised, then, that the next essay in translation was from Æschylus. To Sophocles, as the calm, steadfast master of an art that seems as effortless as Raphael's, Browning would, it will doubtless be agreed, be naturally less attracted. In Æschylus, as in Euripides, there is felt the fierce strife of a transitional age. He is, however, the spokesman of a triumphant generation, the singer of that Salaminian victory which, more than almost any other battle, might well seem to have been miraculously decided by divine interposition. Right is supreme, in all his dramas. Even the wild Oresteian trilogy, seen as a whole, ends in reconcilement and peace at last. Browning's 'Agamemnon' is therefore truly but a fragment, as is the Prometheus play, which alone remains extant. Each is but the first third of a three-act drama.

For this and many other reasons, the 'Heracles,' not the later 'Agamemnon,' seems to me Browning's completest success in translation. In the case of foreign poems so elaborate both in thought and in metrical structure as is any Greek tragedy, there are two widely divergent roads open to the translator. Professor Jebb's and Mr. Fitzgerald's treatment, respectively, of the Œdipus plays will best illustrate both. Professor Jebb, in masterly prose, expresses every shade of the *thought* which close literalness or freer paraphrase, according as need and idiom serve, can reproduce in English at all. For the metrical form, however, we must depend wholly upon the Greek text, which Mr. Jebb gives us in parallel pages. Mr. Fitzgerald, unsurpassed master of rhythm and phrase, has built up a single splendid poem on the general lines of the Greek Œdipus tragedies, fusing the two, re-arranging, suppressing, even adding a word, a verse, an entire ode,

whenever his artistic sense has demanded it. Neither, of course, is Sophocles' very soul — or body. Still, each of these two translators has set up a high yet attainable goal — and has measurably attained it.

Browning twice attempted, like the Colossus that he was, to bestride that wide divergence between the two methods. He undertakes to be absolutely literal — and yet to make each line poetical, each choral ode a rhythmic, rhymed, ornate English poem. Absolute success was unattainable. No language is so elastic as to bear that strain. The result in the 'Heracles' is, however, a marvellous approach to the Greek thought, and, at the same time, a form which, while quite unlike the Greek, is for the most part poetical, graceful, and natural.

As to the 'Agamemnon,' I wish to speak most seriously and with fullest humility. There is a great deal in the Greek play I never understood. A few passages I used to have irreverent doubts whether even the professor, even the poet himself, could fathom! But there really are also a great many lines where I can only construe and comprehend Browning's rugged verse when I have the Greek before me to interpret it. (When this paper was first read, as a lecture before the Boston Browning Society, this last statement was heartily echoed by the best-known schoolmaster in America.)

In other words: Æschylus' thought, above all in this drama, is tenser, swifter, loftier far than Euripides' could ever be. His language and rhythmic movement, on the other hand, are also incomparably more rapid, remote, and difficult than anything the later poet has left us. When Browning attempts to render these most difficult Æschylean choral songs in English verse, and rhymed verse, and at the same time to be ruggedly, solemnly, absolutely literal, the result is too often but the *disjecta membra* of articulate speech and connected thought.

Let us take a passage almost at random:

> Only have care lest grudge of any gods disturb
> With cloud the unsullied shine of that great force, the curb
> Of Troia, struck with damp
> Beforehand in the camp!
> For envyingly is
> The maiden Artemis
> Toward — her father's flying hounds — this house —
> The sacrificers of the piteous
> And cowering beast.

With all reverence for the subtlest thinker and the most ingenious rhymer who has used our English speech, I submit that this is not intelligible to any English reader; it does not even construe (no one can parse *envyingly*); and rhymes like *is* with *Artemis*, *house* with *piteous*, are no true ornament. The latter, indeed, almost rivals our gentle Emerson's bold rhyme of *bear* with — *woodpecker!* In the Greek original this is a loftily poetical passage. The comparison of the Atridæ to a pair of eagles, the winged hounds of Zeus (Agamemnon, 49–54), is one of the loftiest in all poetry, and must have made Pindar hail a kindred spirit — if he had not descried him long before — beyond the hostile Attic border. But —

We must, I think, inscribe upon this powerful, and often splendid, piece of translation the epitaph of Phaëthon (Ovid, Met. II. 327–28).

In any case, the 'Agamemnon' should not be studied or read alone, but always with the 'Choephoroi' and 'Eumenides.' If the splendours of Morshead's 'House of Atreus' make too vivid an impression of horror upon the imagination, the version of Miss Anna Swanwick, while tamer, is at the same time closer in detail to the Greek text.

Perhaps a word will be expected upon the poem called 'Numpholeptos.' The title is certainly Greek, and means, just as Browning says, "rapt by a nymph;" but beyond that there is not a single word in Browning's explanation,

nor even in the poem itself, that stoops to the level of our comprehension. Rather than close with that humiliating confession, let us add a word upon the latest Hellenic poem of Browning.

'Pheidippides' is in no sense a translation. The encounter of the gallant runner and the great god Pan is one of the many marvels with which Herodotus embroiders the story of the Persian Wars (Herodotus, VI. 105–6). The latter end of the tale is, however (as Mr. Cooke's most helpful handbook states), a modern invention, though the notion that an early heroic death is the gods' greatest boon is also Herodotean.[1] The metre of this poem interests me, for it appears to be Browning's suggestion for a rhymed approximation to the hexameter.

> "Halt Pheidippides!" — halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
> "Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious began.
> "How is it, — Athens only in Hellas holds me aloof?"

These lines lack only a final syllable each to be remarkably perfect heroic verse.

Let us end with a word of good omen, which the master uttered of his hero, and we may say in turn of him, in all confidence and trust —

> So is Pheidippides happy for ever, — the noble strong man.

Browning was too noble, too strong, too fully alive, ever to be merely a servile translator. His great experiments in this field have shed a flood of light on the theory and the art of translation. One of these experiments, the 'Heracles,' may long remain the best single version in English of a masterly Greek drama. His original writing upon classical subjects — above all the 'Apology' — is even more instructive, and deeply learned as well. But the creative genius of Browning himself is as remote as could

[1] See *e. g.* the famous tale of Cleobis and Biton, Herodotus, I. 31.

well be from classicism. Upon the most perfect masterpieces of Hellenic poetry — the 'Odyssey,' the 'Antigone,' the 'Odes' of Pindar — he has hardly uttered a word. They may have moved him no more than the Parthenon — whether as a glorious ruin to-day or in all its original splendour — would have moved the artist who had put his whole soul into the groined arches, the clustered statues, the heaven-scaling spires of a Gothic cathedral.

HOMER AND BROWNING.

By PRENTISS CUMMINGS.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, January 28, 1896.]

It has been said by some of Browning's admirers that he was the Homer of this generation. I assume that such admirers were discriminating persons who had a meaning beyond idle panegyric; and in view of the purpose of this Society to consider Browning the present year in connection with Greek literature and art, it has seemed to the essayist that an hour might profitably be spent in determining the sense, if any, in which such a generalization is true.

If such statement be understood to mean that Browning is the supreme poet of this generation, I have intimated that I do not deem it worth discussing. Different preachers, painters, and poets appeal to different orders of mind; and one will strike a sympathetic chord in certain hearts where the others fail. Tennyson and Browning are now lying side by side in Westminster Abbey, and near them are memorials of Longfellow and Lowell, all men who, Prometheus-like, brought fire from heaven wherewithal to communicate to us commonplace mortals something of light and warmth. The relative greatness of such men is a matter of no great moment, and comparisons are liable to be odious. It is the secret of such men's power, their methods and aims, their way of looking at things and stating them, whereof investigation and discussion is profitable.

Again, Homer holds a certain place in literature that is unapproachable. As Horace says of Jupiter, "No other is equal, or second to him." I do not mean this in an artistic sense, although Homer's genius is so consummate that he has been the despair of imitators and of translators for the last three thousand years, but refer to certain special reasons why he holds a place in the imagination of mankind that is altogether unique.

First: the works that bear his name are the earliest extant compositions that can fairly be called literature; and are of peculiar interest to us, as they give the first vivid picture of our own, the Aryan Race. The Pentateuch, which represents Semitic thought, if written by Moses, may possibly be older, though even that is questionable. If the Pentateuch was put in its present form after the captivity, — which many enlightened heretics of to-day maintain, — it is later than Homer by several centuries.

Secondly: Homer has a certain greatness which places him beyond ordinary comparison, owing to his direct and indirect influence on human thought. I refer to his direct influence on the Greek race, and his indirect influence through that race on all subsequent peoples. Neither fact can well be stated too strongly. The probable date of Homer — who, for the purposes of this paper, I assume was a real person — may be stated roughly as 1200 B. C. Mr. Gladstone places him more than a century earlier. Homer's works were first carefully edited in the reign of Pisistratus, about 600 B. C. During a large portion of the interval between those dates, it is probable the poems were preserved only in the memory of rhapsodists, or public reciters, — a tribute to the vitality and the popular estimate of these extraordinary compositions which can hardly be overstated. In fact, Homer's works, not only during the pre-historic period, but ever after as long as Greek was a living language, were to his countrymen a sort of Bible, a

book of books, — an authority on matters of religion, history, conduct, and even philosophy, a standard of taste not only in poetry, but in rhetoric and oratory, and a textbook in the schools as the foundation of all learning. As late as Plato's time it appears that there were gentlemen at Athens who could repeat his entire works from memory; and Plutarch, in the second century of the Christian era, tells of the evening meetings of himself and friends to discuss Homeric questions. The frequency with which his lines are quoted indicate that the Greek public all through their history were more familiar with Homer than most of us are with our own Bible; and attempts were made to gloss over what did not accord with the ethics of a later age, and to give mystical interpretations of his sayings, not unlike what we see to-day in reference to the Bible. The Greek drama was largely founded on Homeric myths, and its best sculpture was an attempt to represent his gods and heroes.

As Homer thus dominated Greek thought, Greece has dominated the thought of the world. The whole of Greece, including its islands, has an area of less than one third that of New England, and its intellectual life centred in Athens, a city which in its proudest estate was smaller both in extent and population than Boston: yet that little country produced the greatest poets, tragedians, comedians, historians, philosophers, sculptors, and orators the world has ever known; and nearly all belonged to Athens, and flourished within a period of four hundred years. And not only has Greece given us our philosophy, and our standards in literature and art, but has had a vast influence on our religion by furnishing not only the language, but much of the thought of the New Testament and of the early Christian Fathers.

Again, Homer stands apart from the poets of to-day in that he represents a style of composition that the world has outgrown. Perhaps there is no less heroism now than

formerly, but we talk less about it. Homer's 'Iliad' and Browning's 'Ring and the Book' are on their face both founded on certain infelicities of married life. Browning's treatment of the subject is mainly limited to its ethical, social, and personal aspects. All this to Homer is of secondary importance, but instead he weaves the story into a great national theme that involves the fate of cities and the interference of the gods. In fact, Homer unconsciously took a subject the interest whereof has not failed even yet. The Trojan War doubtless has some historic basis, and was but the beginning of a series of conflicts, ostensibly for other causes, but really involving the question whether the Eastern or Western civilisation should prevail on the Continent of Europe. The invasion of Xerxes, the conquests of Alexander, the great wars between Rome and Carthage, between Spain and the Moors, the Crusades, the memorable sieges by the Turks of Rhodes and Malta, the late Russian war, and even the recent Armenian troubles are all parts of the same great drama to which Homer's story was but the prelude. Many a time has our civilisation stood in extreme peril. The "Eastern Question" is a burning question still; and the gaze of the world is still turned towards the Hellespont, where Homer's heroes began the fight before the dawn of authentic history.

In order to make an intelligent comparison of Homer and Browning, it is obviously necessary to consider Homer first. We have no certain knowledge of him as a man, for the so-called lives of Homer are valueless; and, unlike Browning, Homer never talked of himself. In six instances of invocation Homer says "Sing to me, O Muse;" and the Greek word of three letters meaning "to me" is absolutely the only allusion he has made to himself; and he neither points morals nor expresses personal opinions. His works afford the only clue to his character; and from them we can but infer that he was quite unlike the consumptive-looking individual represented by the bust that

bears his name. Like Browning, he evidently was a man of the world, keen-sighted and robust, with a wide experience of life in all its phases; but the vividness of his descriptions of camps, hunting-scenes, and keen debates leads to the inference that if not himself a man of affairs, he had a taste for war, politics, and the activities of life, while Browning's works indicate more exclusively a man of thought.

Homer's Philosophy.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that Homer was a shallow thinker. The ancients were deficient in much that we call knowledge; but there is nothing to indicate that the powers of the human mind are greater to-day than they were three thousand years ago. But while Browning lets us into his mental workshop and shows us the processes of thought, Homer gives us only the results of thought. I surmise that his mental processes were so rapid that he was scarcely conscious of them, and his conclusions seem intuitive. The words of the Homeric Age show that in some way a solution had been attempted of certain philosophic questions. The great problem in philosophy is to ascertain the source or basis of human knowledge. Plato represents Socrates on all occasions as inquiring how it is that we know things. We have no evidence that our Aryan ancestors discussed this question, but they had a solution of it. The Greek word meaning "to know" is a second perfect of the verb "to see." This is not the same as "seeing is knowing," but implies that we know because we *have* seen; that is to say, our knowledge is based upon sense perception coupled with reflection. This is substantially the foundation principle of Locke's great treatise, and of other sensational philosophies, including Herbert Spencer's. The doctrine of the relativity of knowledge would naturally follow; but the ancients were saved from this by the belief that the gods were constantly

putting suggestions into men's minds, so that in fact they were transcendentalists.

To give another instance, — volumes have been written on the question whether reasoning is possible without the use of language, and that problem is discussed and lectured upon every year in every great university of the world. Homer presents the views of his age on this question in the word νήπιος, the classical Greek word for infant, but which in Homer three times out of five means fool. It literally means "wordless," — that is to say, the wordless person is the thoughtless person. The Greek words for beautiful and ugly have secondary meanings of honorable and base, that is to say, ethics is assumed to be a branch of æsthetics, — an idea quite contrary to our New England bringing up. There is a great deal of philosophy in the Homeric poems, only it is not stated in abstract propositions, but is the unspoken assumption behind concrete illustrations.

I will give an instance of Homer's intuitive perception of truth, taken from common life, — wherein he shows the vital evil of slavery in a way Mrs. Stowe did not. Agnes Repplier says that after reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' she felt the Thirteenth Amendment had been a ghastly mistake; for "If the result of slavery was to produce a race so infinitely superior to common humanity; if it bred strong, capable, self-restrained men like George, beautiful, courageous, tender-hearted women like Eliza, visions of innocent loveliness like Emmeline, marvels of acute intelligence like Cassey, children of surpassing precocity and charm like little Harry, mothers and wives of patient, simple goodness like Aunt Chloe, and finally, models of all known chivalry and virtue like Uncle Tom himself, — then slavery was the most ennobling institution in the world, and we had committed a grievous crime in degrading a whole heroic race to our narrower, viler level." Now this is more than funny, — it is a piece of just and

acute criticism. Homer had not lost what Ruskin, in the art of drawing, calls the "innocency of the eye," and he saw that the real evil of slavery was its effect in degrading character, and has one of his *dramatis personæ* sum it up in the two best lines ever written on the slavery question: —

> Straightway a slave's doom on a man is fastened
> Far-sighted Zeus takes half his worth away.

Homer has given us quite distinctly his idea of the

Nature of the Poetic Gift.

I will give the original evidence bearing upon this point, — not that the passages cited are particularly fine, but because the subject is interesting, and also to show Homer's method of stating abstract truths concretely, and as it were incidentally.

In the 'Iliad' no bard is mentioned, and there is but one allusion to minstrelsy, — where the night embassy to Achilles to induce him to return to the war find him by his camp-fire playing upon a lyre with a silver yoke, and singing the glorious deeds of heroes. Several times, however, in that poem Homer himself calls upon the Muse for information as to facts and names, saying that man's knowledge of the past is nothing except the Muses aid him. In the 'Odyssey' bards are mentioned on four different occasions. In the first, Penelope is represented as bursting into tears while listening to a song relating the sad return of the Greeks from Troyland, and begs the bard to desist, while Telemachus gently tells her that the poet has only sung the truth, and for that truth Zeus is to blame, not he. The second allusion is merely incidental to a marriage feast at the house of Menelaus, where as part of the entertainment a divine bard is singing and accompanying himself upon the lyre. The third is among the Phæacians,

where the gifts of the bard Demodocus are more fully described. Homer says: —

Then a page drew near, leading the beloved minstrel whom dearly the Muse loved, but gave him both good and evil. Of his eyes she reft him, but gifted him with sweet song. . . . And accordingly the Muse impelled him to sing the glorious deeds of heroes, even that lay whereof the fame had then reached the wide heaven, etc.

Later, after listening to Demodocus with great emotion, Odysseus thus addresses him: —

"Demodocus, thee I praise far beyond all mortal men, whether it be the Muse, daughter of Zeus, that taught thee, or even Apollo, for right accurately dost thou sing the fate of the Achæans, even all they did and suffered, and all their toil just as if thou hadst been present, or heard the tale from another. Come now, change thy strain, and sing the story of the wooden horse . . . and if thou rehearse this aright I will straightway declare unto all men how bounteously God hath gifted thee with divine song." Thus spake he, and Demodocus was moved by the god, and sang.

Near the end of the 'Odyssey,' where Odysseus is slaying the suitors, Phemius, who had been their minstrel, successfully begs for quarter on the ground of his sacred calling, as follows: —

Show mercy on me, Odysseus. On thine own self hereafter will sorrow come if thou slayest me who am a minstrel, and sing before gods and men. For I am inspired, and God hath put in my heart all manner of lays.

From these several passages we see that Homer regarded the poet as neither born nor made, but inspired; and that inspiration is plenary, since it is knowledge of facts and even the lay itself that God puts in his heart. In his own case Homer implies that he sings to men simply what the

Muse sings to him. I think that both Homer and Browning believed that poetry should be didactic. The only other singers mentioned by Homer, the Syrens, tempt Odysseus to land with the promise of knowledge, assuring him that they not only have voices sweet as the honeycomb, but know all that has happened and will hereafter happen on the fruitful earth; and that after listening to them he will go away a wiser man. Homer nowhere suggests that poets sing for fame, or for any other motive than simply to obey a divine impulse, and express the lays with which Heaven has filled their hearts.

While not accepting fully Homer's theory, there is no doubt that he expresses his honest conviction, and that the form and substance of his poetry presented itself to his mind so vividly, and the impulse toward expression was so overmastering that he believed the gods spoke through him. If Homer had resolved not to be a poet I think he would have failed to keep his resolution. I do not feel the same certainty as to Browning. What little he says of poets and poetry is on a different plane from Homer's. He early in life resolved to be a poet, and the world has reason to be glad of it; but perhaps he might have found adequate means of expression other than verse. He was certain to be a transcendentalist in some direction, but it seems to me, if not a transcendental philosopher or theologian like Hegel or Swedenborg, he might have been a transcendental painter or musician like Turner or Wagner. Like Browning, all those men spoke a language which the world in general could not comprehend, but which to a select few was intelligible and priceless. Perhaps better judges will not assent to this view as to Browning's transcendentalism; but it appears to me that his whole nature was intuitional, and that he did violence to that nature in yielding an intellectual assent to the philosophies of his day; that his reasoning is made up of two things which cannot be united, the intuitional and the positive; that

the poet above all men should be intuitional; that Browning's achievements are due to prodigious powers of mind, and that he was hampered by forcing his mind to work by methods that to him were unnatural.

Homer's Style.

So perfect in form are the Homeric poems that we can almost believe the Muses composed them and put them in his heart as completed lays.

His style has best been described in an essay by Matthew Arnold, who says that Homer both in thought and movement is always rapid, in thought and diction always simple; that he is always direct, and always noble. Measuring Homer's translators by this standard Arnold justly condemns them all; but he admits that even a fairly good English translation to suit all those requirements is well-nigh impossible. English poetry, particularly rhymed poetry, is inconsistent with simplicity and directness. The danger of attempting to preserve Homer's nobleness, particularly in that plain narrative which must often occur in epic poetry, is that it will degenerate into bombast, — a thing which Homer has the supreme gift to avoid and yet preserve the grand style. Every sentence is as simple and direct as prose, with every word in the right place to preserve the proper emphasis, — and yet is in exquisite poetic form, and in a most exacting metre. No prose translation can do Homer any kind of justice; and yet, I think, all things considered, the prose translations of him are the best. What in Homer impresses a reader most profoundly is a certain sense of mastery, — an absolute spontaneity both of thought and expression, so that nothing appears to have been worked up or inserted for the purpose of preserving some other telling phrase or sentence. The like cannot be said even of so great an English masterpiece as Gray's 'Elegy.'

The lines

> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air,

are remembered and quoted by everybody. The two lines preceding are seldom quoted, yet they are exquisitely wrought. The trouble with them is that they are wrought, — and wrought with a purpose of harmonising in rhyme, metre, and sentiment with the lines I have given, lines which were thought of first, which were spontaneous, and which the poet wished to preserve in their simple form. In Homer everything is spontaneous and in a most simple and natural form, or at least appears so.

One marked result of Homer's style is a wonderful clearness of statement, and a vividness in the series of pictures with which his pages are full. An English-speaking person with a fair knowledge of Greek will find Homer easier to read than Browning. The following from Browning's pen shows his appreciation of the clearness of the ancient classics: —

> They came to me in my first dawn of life
> Which passed alone with wisest ancient books
> All halo-girt with fancies of my own;
> And I myself went with the tale — a god
> Wandering after beauty, or a giant
> Standing vast in the sunset — an old hunter
> Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
> Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.
> I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
> As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives:
> I had not seen a work of lofty art,
> Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,
> Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
> On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
> On deep groves and white temples and wet caves:
> And nothing ever will surprise me now —
> Who stood before the naked Swift-footed,
> Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

In this passage Browning refers not only to the clearness of the ancient authors, but to the clearness of the youthful

imagination; but both ideas are pertinent to the matter in hand. It is an important part of Homer's art that he leaves so much to the imagination, and says just enough to stimulate the imagination. His figures appear upon the stage like "a giant standing vast in the sunset," — always clear in outline, and silhouetted against a brilliant background. I mean that is the way Homer leaves them; but the reader's imagination completes the picture till it is clear-cut, almost like a cameo. Homer was an impressionist. In so styling him I do not refer to his reputed blindness, nor even to the recent theory that he was colour-blind, but to the fact that he paints his pictures with a few masterly touches that convey the general impression desired, without excessive use of pigment, and without details. Whenever Helen appears we always feel the effect of her bewildering beauty, yet Homer never even tells us whether she was large or small, a blonde or a brunette, nor gives any specific description of face or figure. We are told in different passages that she is white-armed, fair-cheeked, long-robed, has lovely hair, is a goddess among women, and is like golden Aphrodite, and that is all. Every one imagines her according to his personal taste. Probably no two readers have precisely the same picture presented to their minds, and it is for that very reason that every one gets the general impression that Homer intended; and it is largely for this reason that Homer is so great to people of every age and every stage of culture, — why he is the world's poet, — the poet not simply of one generation, but of all generations.

Defects in Browning's Style.

In the matter of style, probably no two great authors are more unlike than Homer and Browning. The latter is not rapid in movement, simple in thought or diction, is not direct, nor always noble. I do not think it is Browning's acknowledged thoughtfulness or depth of

meaning that makes him so difficult to follow, but because he is not rapid, simple, or direct. I have heard it claimed that Browning *is rapid*, and that it is his rapidity that prevents the ordinary mind from keeping pace with him, but cannot assent to either view. Homer's rapidity does not make him hard to understand. His rapidity is natural, he sees his objective point, goes straight for it, and knows when he gets there; whereas Browning's rapidity, such as it is, is unnatural, like a man with seven-league boots on, whose stride carries him by the objective point, and who keeps retracing his steps, commenting, meanwhile, on all that he sees from his several points of view. Mrs. Orr, in her 'Life of Browning,' makes a criticism somewhat similar, saying that his neglect in youth of such studies as logic and mathematics "led to involutions and overlappings of thought and phrase due to his never learning to follow the processes of more normally constituted minds." Perhaps I can find a better comparison to explain my meaning that Browning was not rapid in movement notwithstanding his seven-league boots. We all know the difference between the air of 'Home, Sweet Home,' and 'Home, Sweet Home, with Variations.' In the latter the fingers of the pianist move with much greater rapidity than in the former, and many more notes and chords are struck in a given time; but the movement of the theme is slow, and great skill is required in the rendering to prevent the "variations" from overlaying and obscuring the theme. Here, I think, is the vice in Browning's style which makes him difficult to follow, — that however simple his theme he involves it in complex variations, and thus he is neither simple, nor direct, nor (so far as the action is concerned) rapid, and the ordinary mind becomes weary and confused before any objective point is reached. So much time is required in searching for the lost chord that the reader is apt to conclude that there is no such chord, or, at all events, that the quest is not for him. With Homer, on the other hand,

it is the action that is rapid; and this the mind follows with ease. As to his rapidity of form and diction Homer's trail-footed translators give the reader no conception. It is doubtful if the same effect of rapidity could be produced even in the Greek of the classical period, and still less in our modern English. It is fair to say, however, that in this respect and all other respects, Homer far surpassed the authors who were most nearly his contemporaries.

Browning, speaking through Cleon, in the poem of that name, claims that ancient men like Homer, though supreme in one direction, are inferior, on the whole, to the modern man, who is composite and great in many directions. That proposition involves an interesting question which it is not within the province of this paper to discuss; but it contains an element of truth to which I shall recur later. A suggestion even more important he makes elsewhere in three or four different poems, that the aim and scope of Greek art was finite, was limited to form and feature and what pertains to this world, and therefore capable of perfection, while modern art aims at the infinite, at the expression of the inner man rather than the outer, and accepts imperfection as the necessary price. This raises a second great question not to be discussed here, — whether art should be limited in its purpose with perfection possible, or should aim at the unattainable with failure certain. Browning chose the latter of these alternatives, while Homer adopted the former, not from choice, but because with his philosophy he could not help it. Browning began life with the resolve to become a poet and portray the growth of the soul: but Homer did not suppose man had a soul in our sense of that word. Man's future life was a shadowy, almost unconscious existence, and from it there was no escape. The present life, therefore, comprised all possible hopes and aspirations for man. Even Homer's gods were finite; and he apparently had no idea that anything was infinite. Herbert Spencer says we have no such

idea either, that the infinite is unthinkable; but Browning did not really believe him. From a simply artistic point of view, Homer's limitations may have been his good fortune; but Browning's daring flights are his great glory, even if, like one of Juvenal's contemporaries, he flew with dripping wings.

Religion.

Perhaps in this connection it will be appropriate to speak of the vast difference in the points of view of these two authors growing out of difference in religion. The accepted religion of an age profoundly influences even the irreligious. It is said that Browning was sceptical as to the religion of the Bible; yet his works are deemed of very special value by theologians and preachers. I shall not dwell upon Browning's theology, because that subject is to be treated in a special paper by another, later in the year; but will say in passing that in 'Cleon' he implies that some form of revelation is necessary to save man from hopelessness as to a future life, and to make the present life seem rational. Thus Browning's optimism must have been based on some religious faith, though perhaps that faith did not run on the precise lines of any accepted creed. The Bible teaches that God's power is infinite, and his wisdom and goodness past finding out; and while man is free and can go astray, he is also free to redeem himself, and a self-conscious immortality is promised. Thus a religion of hope is possible. Browning being brought up in such an atmosphere, and accepting the general features of this belief, had the requisite temperament, and was an optimist.

Homer, on the other hand, is the prince of pessimists among great authors. With his theology and his view of life and death he could not be otherwise. His gods were superhuman, but still were finite; and their powers were used capriciously, — sometimes for man's good, but more

often to betray him. Man was a free agent to a limited extent; but in the main his life was governed by a destiny over which he had no control. Homer's gods were much less ethical than his men and women; their favourites were the gifted and not the good, and they had neither the power nor the disposition to alleviate human misery. Zeus is represented as saying that "Of all that liveth and moveth upon the earth man is the most wretched;" and Homer so depicts human life. No one of his leading characters is happy; and even among subordinate characters, when the curtain is lifted, little appears but sorrow and disappointment. The women weeping about the body of the dead Patroclus, Homer tells us "ostensibly mourned for Patroclus, but really each for her own woes." The name "Achilles" has the same root as the English word "ache," and the fundamental root of the word "Odysseus" means "ill-starred" or "unfortunate."

Nor was there anything more hopeful in the life to come. The shades had just enough self-consciousness to know that their existence was joyless. Even the haughty Achilles, meeting Odysseus in Hades, says when congratulated on being a king among the dead, —

> Speak not lightly of Death, noble Odysseus. I would rather be a hireling on earth, even of a master unportioned and ill-to-do, than reign over all the nations of the departed dead.

Yet to show that a noble man can make a noble use even of pessimism, I will quote the following passage from the 'Iliad,' where Sarpedon addresses Glaucus when about to enter battle:

> Glaucus, wherefore do we twain hold the highest honours, — seats of honour, and feasts, and full cups in Lycia, and all men look on us as gods? Wherefore hold we wide lands of orchard and wheat-bearing fields? In return for these things it behoveth us to take our stand in the forefront of the Lycians and face the heat of the battle, that the well-armed Lycians may

say, "Verily our Kings are not unworthy men, they that eat fat sheep and drink the choice, sweet wine; they also excel in valour, and fight in the front ranks of the Lycians." Ah, comrade, if by escaping from this one battle we should for ever be ageless and immortal, neither would I, myself, fight in the front ranks, nor send thee into man-ennobling battle; but as it is, since ten thousand fates of death on every hand beset us which it is not in mortal man to evade or avoid, let us on, and glory win or glory give.

Sarpedon says in substance that if man had anything to lose that was of real value he might well hesitate to imperil it, and that on this occasion he probably would skulk himself; but man's lot is hopeless, and therefore during his brief day he should fulfil his manhood and the claims of duty. There is nothing in Homer of the sentiment "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He is no less pessimistic than Cleon; he is not a composite man like Cleon; but in his simplicity he takes a much nobler view of duty and life.

Points of Resemblance.

I have dwelt at some length upon the points wherein Homer and Browning differ, both because the differences must be ascertained before we can determine their points of resemblance, and also to show that no man of this generation, even if he had Homer's genius, could be a second Homer. Homer and Browning were men of marked individuality, and no other great writer is much like either; but after all, the great difference between Homer and Browning, or any other modern poet, is due to differences in the ages wherein they lived, — differences in civilisation, religion, points of view, and the whole manner of life and thought. Even the differences in style are not wholly due to individuality, but are owing in part to the unlikeness between the ancient and the modern world. Homer represented an age of great simplicity; and the thoughts and

motives of his men and women ran on simple lines so that they had neither the complicated virtues nor the complicated vices of the present day. Simplicity and directness of style would follow naturally; while Browning, representing a complex age, and deeming himself, as he says through Cleon, a composite man, and the greater for his compositeness, when he attempted to represent himself and his age, was under a certain constraint to adopt a composite style of composition.

These differences suggest a most important resemblance, — that Homer and Browning were each the poet that best represented his age. That this is true of Homer is shown by the fact that his poems were preserved while his literary contemporaries are unknown, and still better shown by the naturalness and encyclopædic character of the works themselves. They are an epitome of a civilisation that otherwise would have been forgotten twenty-five hundred years ago, and represent every phase of the life, aspirations, and thought of those days. Of what we call knowledge Homer had almost nothing. Outside of Greece and Asia Minor the world was to him little more than a place of fable and enchantment; there was no scientific thought, and no one had the opportunity, even if he had had the disposition, to discuss abstruse problems of ethics as metaphysics. Darwin's law is imperative; and views and ideals of life must turn mainly on what is necessary to sustain and preserve it. With the Homeric peoples peace and security were scarcely dreamed of, and life was a struggle only to be preserved by valour, cunning, and endurance. Thus valour, cunning, and endurance of necessity became the typical virtues of the age, and the hero of the 'Iliad' represents heroic valour, and the hero of the 'Odyssey' heroic endurance coupled with cunning. The action, passion, and pathos of such a life, the heroic struggle against fate and circumstance, were all there was for Homer to depict.

The necessities of the Homeric environment required brawn; the necessities of to-day require brains. Modern life makes demands upon science and political economy, on law and ethics, on art and philosophy, — at least that phase of philosophy which deals with life and living. The life of the Homeric Age was an outward life, and could be presented in a series of pictures. Modern life is inward, and involves a series of problems. The ordinary poet lives in dreamland; but Browning lived in the real world and appreciated that this is an age of problems; and these problems he has presented and discussed. This distinctive feature of the nineteenth century either was not perceived by other poets, or they shrank from the task of representing it. Most of the writings of Tennyson and his great contemporaries deal with the past, or with subjects and ideas that might belong to any age. Even where a modern subject is taken, as in Tennyson's 'Princess,' it all seems to be in an ideal and not the real world. Browning, on the other hand, no matter how far back he goes in time, as in 'Paracelsus,' or 'Sordello,' or even 'Cleon,' gives us the thoughts and the problems of to-day. Dreamland is one of the great powers, and I mean no disrespect for its envoys who bring with them fitting credentials; but on the simple question, Which of our great poets best represented the spirit of the nineteenth century? I think there is no question that it is Browning. Indeed, I doubt if any prose writer would give to a future historian of this century so much real insight into its thought as he. Browning also perceived that this complex life has developed phases of vice and virtue of which Homer never dreamed. This is an age of humbug, and Browning has given us Mr. Sludge, the Medium. This is an age when scepticism walks up the steps into the pulpit, and he gives us Bishop Blougram. This is the age of a nobility bankrupt in fortune and in character, and he gives us Guido; an age when youth, beauty, and money are sold by managing mothers in ex-

change for a title, and he gives us Pompilia; yes, and he also gives the life led by the victims of such ill-starred marriages. It is an age of slang, and Mr. Browning does not mind giving us a little expressive slang himself. Homer is often eloquent. Mr. Gladstone pronounces the speech of Achilles in 'Book IX of the Iliad' the finest specimen of eloquence in all literature. Browning seldom aims at eloquence, and evidently feels most at home in the colloquial style which he adopts so often.

Concerning the matters wherein Homer and Browning are alike in genius and spirit, many resemblances of a superficial character may be given. For example, both have high ideals of womanhood, and a soul toward the sex that is full knightly, though it seems to have occurred to neither that political power is essential to woman's true dignity or development. Neither are poets of nature; though their occasional descriptions of natural scenery and phenomena are exquisite. These two points of resemblance, however, suggest another that is fundamental, and of the highest consequence: the interest of both is centred on men and women, and the reason for it is that the spirit of both is in the highest degree dramatic. I think all Homeric scholars, if asked what is the most distinguishing mark of Homer's genius, — what has given his works their enduring interest, — would without hesitation answer that it was his dramatic quality. If, at the time when Greek tragedy was at its height, Athenian scholars had been asked who was their most dramatic author, they would have agreed without dissent that it was Homer. Æschylus himself says something to the effect that he and his associates simply serve up the crumbs that fell from the table of the great master. Out of curiosity, the essayist has counted up in several books of the 'Iliad' taken at random the number of lines purporting to be spoken by his characters, and finds that they comprise from three to four fifths of the whole; and quotations

within quotations are constant in Homer as in Browning. One special point in Homer's dramatic quality may be interesting. I refer to the difficulty of expressing public sentiment in dramatic form. Where music is admissible, public sentiment may be expressed by a chorus, as in the Greek dramatists, and in oratorio. Shakespeare gets over the difficulty by conversations between unnamed parties, designated, for example, as "first Roman gentleman" and "second Roman gentleman." Homer expresses this by the use of the indefinite pronoun "τίς," which means "a certain one." That is to say, Homer often sets forth that "a certain one" said something "to his neighbour standing near," and always means thereby that this "certain one" was expressing public opinion. Browning accomplishes the same object in 'The Ring and the Book' by representing three different unnamed individuals as giving the views of "one half Rome," "the other half of Rome," and "tertium quid." Perhaps it was Homer, perhaps it was Shakespeare, perhaps it was his native genius that suggested this method to Browning.

On Browning's dramatic spirit it is unnecessary to enlarge. Everything presented itself to his mind in dramatic form, even when stating abstract truths. Poems like 'Cleon' are thoroughly dramatic. The lines respecting Greek statuary, —

> They are perfect — how else? They shall never change:
> We are faulty — why not? We have time in store, —

are put in the form of question and answer, as if two people were in animated discussion. The two authors differ in this respect, that Homer is full of action, and Browning full of thought; but the cause of that difference I have attempted to explain elsewhere. Thus the most distinguishing feature of Homer and Browning — the feature that gives character and form to their entire works — is the same; and in dramatic spirit Browning is indeed the Homer of this generation. One of the effects of this

spirit on Browning appears, I think, in his choice of subjects. I mean the choice, in his most important works, of some old story that is full of inconsistencies, to which he undertakes to give unity, either by having it told by different persons, or some other dramatic artifice.

One result of this dramatic tendency in both poets is a universal sympathy, a broad humanity, which covers all sorts and conditions of men, the sinner as well as the saint. Both are the poets of sinful man. The case in behalf of Guido and Mr. Sludge are strongly put by Browning, and Homer is equally fair and eloquent in behalf of Penelope's suitors. This sympathy, however, never obscures the moral judgment of either Homer or Browning; in fact, both are severe in their moral judgments. Browning, in 'Ivan Ivanovitch,' tells the story of the mother whose children were sacrificed to the wolves in a way to excite the deepest sympathy. We take in fully her instinctive love of life, her genuine love for her children, and how she was benumbed with cold and terror, but after stating all this most eloquently, when the peasant without answering a word chops off her head with his axe, Browning tells us it was the judgment of God. Homer, in like manner, shows us all the palliating circumstances affecting the suitors of Penelope, and there is no doubt that that experienced matron hoodwinked and coquetted with the misguided young men in a very artful manner; but Homer never forgot that they were in the wrong, and when the time comes there is no escape from their just doom. Odysseus throws off the rags in which he was disguised, bends his fatal bow, and the bully among the suitors is the first to fall. The hypocrite is allowed to live just long enough to make one more hypocritical speech, but falls next, and the slaughter is kept up until all have perished. Homer even follows the suitors beyond this life, and tells how their shades were driven by Hermes with his magic wand down the mouldering pathway, by the

White Rocks and the streams of the ocean, beyond the gates of the sunset and the land of dreams, to the meadow of asphodel where dwell the dead, the phantoms of worn-out men; and thus they go "gibbering like bats" to Hades, where he leaves them.

To the question then, whether Browning is the Homer of this generation, I think an affirmative answer within the limits I have set can fairly be rendered.

Homer has been the chiefest among poets for three thousand years. Browning's lines —

> The Artificer's hand is not arrested
> With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
> They stand for our copy, and, once invested
> With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished,

are neither truth nor poetry. Neither Greek art nor Greek literature will be "abolished" while our civilisation lasts. Will Browning's fame be equally enduring? That there will be no second Browning in the next three thousand years I can easily believe; but he is at great disadvantage as compared with Homer. Homer's age was so simple that he could represent it without what may be called "fashion." We know how out-of-date a photograph looks in a short time, where clothing or other fashion is shown. This is why the nude in art is so important; and there is, so to speak, a certain simple nudity in Homer, so that his artistic effects defy time and change. Browning, on the other hand, is all fashion, — the fashion of a complex, unsettled, and peculiarly transitional age. We have Scripture warrant that the fashion of this world passeth away. Browning has never been generally popular, but has a great charm and long will have a great charm for certain classes of minds; but it is a question whether three thousand years hence his most characteristic works will not be valued by the historian and the lover of literary curiosities rather than by the lover of poetry.

BALAUSTION'S OPINION OF EURIPIDES.

By PHILIP STAFFORD MOXOM.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, February 25, 1896.]

FORTUNATELY, my theme does not demand from me a critical judgment on Euripides as a dramatic craftsman, or a comparison of Euripides with his great predecessor, Æschylus, and his equally great contemporary, Sophocles, — a task for which I have not the necessary qualifications. Whatever expression I may give of the opinions of dramatic critics, or of my own estimate of "sad Electra's poet," will be incidental to a true report of the opinion of the Rhodian maid and wife concerning the poet by whose "strangest, saddest, sweetest song" she saved her life in the harbour of Syracuse, and whose "choric flower," flung in the face of "Sparté's brood," saved Athenai's "maze of marble arrogance" from utter destruction when the city lay in abject helplessness at the feet of Lysander.

Balaustion's opinion of Euripides means, of course, Browning's opinion of Euripides, — at least in so far as Browning's opinion finds expression, through Balaustion, in the two poems, 'Balaustion's Adventure' and 'Aristophanes' Apology.' The large-souled, radiant Greek woman is but the vehicle of our poet's thought. She is a pure invention, yet so perfect is the invention, and with such powerful dramatic art is she set before us, that we find ourselves compelled to deal with her as with a living personality. Of all the characters in Browning's works none is more real, not even Pompilia or Caponsacchi, than this

"lyric girl." We can see her standing on the steps of the Herakleian temple, the sea-breeze lifting the dark masses of her abundant hair, her lithe form erect with courage and vibrating with noble passion, and her great eyes flashing out her ardent soul upon her Syracusan audience, as she pours forth the story of Alkestis; or, when girl has blossomed into woman and maid has ripened into wife, we see her again in the home at Athens, with stately dignity vindicating her poet against the gibes and half sophistical, sometimes wholly brutal, arguments of Aristophanes; or, again, when the doom has fallen and Athens lies stript and wasted under the ravaging hand of Lysander, she stands with her Euthukles on the deck of the ship that bears them

> from — not sorrow but despair,
> Not memory but the present and its pang!

from poor, ruined Athens to rosy, sea-girt Rhodes. There she stands, with "those warm golden eyes," now full of inextinguishable sadness, turned backward toward the lost glory, and with marks of deep anguish on her fair face; yet by each

> twelve hours' sweep
> Of surge secured from horror, . . .
> Quieted out of weakness into strength.

It is only by a strong effort of the will that, as we read these two poems, we can dissociate our minds from Balaustion the Greek woman, and listen solely, with critical ear alert, to Browning, the modern scholar and critic as well as poet, while he discloses to us the judgment of his intellect as well as of his heart on the last, yet not the least, of the three great tragic poets of Greece.

Since the time of Schlegel and Goethe there has developed a new and more sympathetic interest in the study and interpretation of Euripides. Quite the noblest and most significant expression of that interest appears in these two poems, 'Balaustion's Adventure' and 'Aristophanes'

Apology.' The first is a beautiful dramatic poem, the heart of which is a rendering, in powerful verse, of the 'Alkestis.' This rendering, while not a mere translation, yet satisfies the critical sense by its faithfulness to the essential meaning of the Greek. It is an interpretation as well as a translation, for there is occasional interjection of explanatory comment, and sometimes the words of the chorus appear in paraphrase. We might almost call it Euripides cast in the larger mould of Browning. The judgment of Mahaffy is that "by far the best translation [of the 'Alkestis'] is Mr. Browning's."

The second is a poem, ensphering also, like the first, a play from Euripides. This play, the 'Herakles,' is rendered with all the force and fidelity that mark the rendering of the 'Alkestis,' but with stricter regard for the form of the original, and with none of the interpretative paraphrase that is so prominent a feature of the preceding work. The reason of this is that in 'Balaustion's Adventure' the 'Alkestis' is dramatically told, or recited, to a group of girls to whom it is strange, and without any of the accessories of the stage; while in 'Aristophanes' Apology' the 'Herakles' is read by Balaustion from the original manuscript of Euripides, to an author who knew the writer and did not need the interpretative comment which, in the former instance, the absence of scenic setting rendered necessary.

In the second case the drama is only an element of the larger poem. With less of lyric charm than 'Balaustion's Adventure,' 'Aristophanes' Apology' is a poem of greater scope and power, abounding in lines that "flash with the lightning and leap with the live thunder" of the maker; but still more, it is an acute and masterly criticism of the Greek drama as represented especially by Euripides and his brilliant detractor Aristophanes. For centuries Euripides has suffered from both a prejudiced and an uncritical comparison of his work with that of

Æschylus and Sophocles. The prejudice with which he has been treated has been due mainly to the calumnies uttered with persistent iteration and an unscrupulous use of coarse caricature by Aristophanes in his Comedies. At last the prejudice has yielded to a deeper study, a juster and more sympathetic criticism, and a profounder understanding of the phases of Greek life and thought which found expression in Euripides. I quote with pleasure the statement of Mahaffy that "Mr. Browning has treated the controversy between Euripides and Aristophanes with more learning and ability than all other critics in his 'Aristophanes' Apology,' which is, by the way, an Euripides' Apology also, if such be required in the present day." As an expression of Browning's estimate of Euripides, 'Aristophanes' Apology' is much more full than 'Balaustion's Adventure.' In the latter we have an interpretation of the great dramatist mainly through one of his plays; in the former we have, besides the interpretation through that "perfect piece," the 'Herakles,' a prolonged critical discussion in which the various phases of Euripides' genius are exhibited as, perhaps, only Browning could exhibit them. Though the scope of 'Balaustion's Adventure' is narrower, it affords, so far as it goes, as true an index of Browning's appreciation of Euripides as the longer and more technical 'Apology.'

I will now give some account of these two poems, of course quite briefly, and in a broadly suggestive rather than in a minutely critical way.

The story of the first poem is this: A girl, whose name we know not, but who receives the name "Balaustion," "pomegranate flower," because of her lyric gifts and her great charms of both mind and person, a native of the island of Rhodes, though child of an Athenian mother, hears with others in Kameiros of the disaster which has befallen Athens in the overwhelming defeat of Nikias and Demosthenes at Syracuse. Instantly there is a clamorous

demand among the people that Rhodes shall abandon her alliance with Athens and join the Spartan League, for Sparta and Syracuse are allies. While the revolters wait for naval help from Knidos, Balaustion gathers a company of kindred spirits who are loyal to Athens, —

> the life and light
> Of the whole world worth calling world at all!

and proceeding to Kaunos, finds a captain who, with like loyalty to Athens, consents to take them thither in his ship. These, who would

> Rather go die at Athens, lie outstretched
> For feet to trample on, before the gate
> Of Diomedes or the Hippadai,
> Before the temples and among the tombs,
> Than tolerate the grim felicity
> Of harsh Lakonia,

turned "the glad prow westward," and "soon were out at sea." Blown out of course by an adverse wind, after several days they were startled by the appearance of a pirate-ship —

> Lokrian, or that bad breed off Thessaly.

At the same moment they sight land which they suppose to be friendly Crete. Despite their efforts the Rhodians see the pirates slowly but surely gaining on them. Then the inspired Balaustion springs upon the altar by the mast and sings,

> That song of ours which saved at Salamis,

a song from the great heart of Æschylus, —

> O sons of Greeks, go, set your country free!

Electrified by her song, the sailors "churn the black water white," and are drawing away from the fell pirates, who come "panting up in one more throe and passion of pursuit," when suddenly they discover that they have run straight upon hostile Syracuse. A galley meets them and

demands who they are. The captain cautiously answers, "Kaunians;" whereupon they are charged with being Athenians or sympathisers with Athens, and are bidden back. The fragment of song from Æschylus has betrayed them. In vain they plead for mercy and deliverance from the pirate waiting grimly seaward. Discouraged, they are about to turn back to their fate, when some one of the Syracusans calls out —

> Wait!
> That song was veritable Aischulos,
> . . . . .
> . . . How about Euripides?
> . . . . .
> Might you know any of his verses too?

Then the weary voyagers remember the tale told of wounded and captive Athenians nursed and liberated if they knew aught of the new poet, Euripides, which they could recite to eager Syracusans. The captain shouts with joy

> Euoi, praise the God!
> . . . Here she stands,
> Balaustion! Strangers, greet the lyric girl!
> Euripides? . . .
> Why, fast as snow in Thrace, the voyage through,
> Has she been falling thick in flakes of him!
> . . . . . .
> Now it was some whole passion of a play;
> Now, peradventure, but a honey-drop
> That slipt its comb i' the chorus. If there rose
> A star, before I could determine steer
> Southward or northward — if a cloud surprised
> Heaven, ere I fairly hollaed "Furl the sail!"
> She had at fingers' end both cloud and star;
> Some thought that perched there, tame and tunable,
> Fitted with wings; and still, as off it flew,
> "So sang Euripides" she said. . . .
> Sing them a strophe, with the turn-again,
> Down to the verse that ends all, proverb-like,
> And save us, thou Balaustion, bless the name!

Balaustion, with her quick woman's wit, proposes that they all go ashore, and she, standing on the steps of the temple of Herakles, the Syracusans' tutelary god, will recite for

them a whole new play in which Euripides does honour to their god —

> That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his,
> ALKESTIS.
>
> Then, because Greeks are Greeks, and hearts are hearts,
> And poetry is power, — they all outbroke
> In a great joyous laughter with much love:
> "Thank Herakles for the good holiday!
> Make for the harbour! Row, and let voice ring,
> 'In we row, bringing more Euripides!'"

Soon all the city is astir. The multitude pours out "to the superb temple," and there, for three successive days, Balaustion delights the crowding listeners by repeating again and again the 'Alkestis.' Then, having gained liberty for herself and her companions, and much praise, and withal a lover, Balaustion sets sail once more for Athens. The voyage is made in safety, she sees Euripides, the master, kisses his hand, tells her story, and content, in time, marries the youth, Euthukles, who lost his heart to her by the temple steps in Syracuse, and makes her home in the city of her love.

When she recounts the whole story of the adventure and its issue to her companions, she pays this tribute to her poet: —

> Ah, but if you had seen the play itself!
> They say, my poet failed to get the prize:
> Sophokles got the prize, — great name! They say,
> Sophokles also means to make a piece,
> Model a new Admetos, a new wife:
> Success to him! One thing has many sides.
> The great name! But no good supplants a good,
> Nor beauty undoes beauty. Sophokles
> Will carve and carry a fresh cup, brimful
> Of beauty and good, firm to the altar-foot,
> And glorify the Dionusiac shrine:
> Not clash against this crater in the place
> Where the God put it when his mouth had drained,
> To the last dregs, libation life-blood-like,
> And praised Euripides forevermore —
> *The Human with his droppings of warm tears.*

The limits prescribed by my theme prohibit me from considering the conclusion of the poem, in which Browning tries his own hand at a purely subjective treatment of the Alkestis legend, with such success as to make us feel more deeply than ever his peculiar power as pre-eminently the poet of human life.

'Aristophanes' Apology,' as its name implies, is a defence of Aristophanes by himself; but it is also quite as much an Euripides' Apology, since, in the person of Balaustion, Browning defends Euripides against the coarse and savage assaults of his comic foe, and vindicates his art, his truth, and his loftiness of spirit and aim. Balaustion, repelling attack on her poet, "carries the war into Africa," and forces Aristophanes to draw on all his resources of argument and raillery in self-defence. The poem is at once difficult and fascinating. It is difficult, not because of any exceptional obscurity of style, but because of its freight of learning; to understand and enjoy it thoroughly one needs a very considerable knowledge of Greek life in the fifth century B. C. It is fascinating because of its acute and nimble argument, its appeal to a great variety of emotions, and its wealth of poetic thought and imagery. As in the preceding poem, so also in this, the main interest centres in Balaustion, and in both Balaustion is inseparable from Euripides. In the former, a play of Euripides saves her and her companions from death or captivity; in the latter, a "choric flower" from the 'Electra' saves Athens from utter demolition. In 'Balaustion's Adventure' we have the girl's fine enthusiasm for her poet flooding the whole poem with rosy light; in 'Aristophanes' Apology' we have the enthusiasm still, but we have also the woman's mature thought, penetrating insight, swift and effective argument, and, at times, the lambent flame of her pure indignation. At first, the former poem has the greater charm, but to a deeper reading the latter poem discloses its superior attraction and its more varied appeal to the mind and heart.

A brief outline of the poem is as follows: It begins with Balaustion and Euthukles, on board ship, returning to Rhodes, after the shameful defeat of the Athenian fleet at Aigispotamoi, and the subsequent capture and humiliation of Athens by Lysander. Balaustion pours out a lament over the fallen city of her love: —

> Athenai, live thou hearted in my heart:
> Never, while I live, may I see thee more,
> Never again may these repugnant orbs
> Ache themselves blind before the hideous pomp,
> The ghastly mirth which mocked thine overthrow
> — Death's entry, Haides' outrage!
> Doomed to die, —
> Fire should have flung a passion of embrace
> About thee till, resplendently inarmed
> (Temple by temple folded to his breast,
> All thy white wonder fainting out in ash)
> Lightly some vaporous sigh of soul escaped,
> And so the Immortals bade Athenai back!
> Or earth might sunder and absorb thee, save,
> Buried below Olumpos and its gods,
> Akropolis to dominate her realm
> For Koré, and console the ghosts; or, sea,
> What if thy watery, plural vastitude,
> Rolling unanimous advance, had rushed,
> Might upon might, a moment, — stood, one stare,
> Sea-face to city face, thy glaucous wave
> Glassing that marbled last magnificence, —
> Till Fate's pale tremulous foam-flower tipped the grey,
> And when wave broke and overswarmed and, sucked
> To bounds back, multitudinously ceased,
> And land again breathed unconfused with sea,
> Attiké was, Athenai was not now!

But the temptation to quote must be resisted. Balaustion, possessed by the tragic memories of the past year, tells out the story while Euthukles, her patient and devoted scribe, writes it down. The story opens with the night when the news of Euripides' death came to Athens. Balaustion proposes that they celebrate the event by reading Euripides' play, the 'Herakles,' which the poet had given her when she last saw him.

Suddenly they are interrupted by cries from a troop of revellers outside, and a knocking at the door with the demand, in the name of Bacchos, that they open. At first they hesitate, then, in a moment, they hear

> One name of an immense significance,

and Euthukles opens the door. There they find Aristophanes, crowned with ivy, the chorus of his just-rendered successful play, the 'Thesmophoriazusai,' and a crowd of dancers and flute-girls, all more or less drunk. One flash from Balaustion's eyes quells the tumult, and all slink away abashed, save Aristophanes. Balaustion's portrait of Aristophanes, as he stood at the door of her house, is inimitable: —

> There stood in person Aristophanes.
> And no ignoble presence! On the bulge
> Of the clear baldness, — all his head one brow, —
> True, the veins swelled, blue network, and there surged
> A red from cheek to temple, — then retired
> As if the dark-leaved chaplet damped a flame, —
> Was never nursed by temperance or health.
> But huge the eyeballs rolled back native fire,
> Imperiously triumphant: nostrils wide
> Waited their incense; while the pursed mouth's pout
> Aggressive, while the beak supreme above,
> While the head, face, nay, pillared throat thrown back,
> Beard whitening under like a vinous foam,
> These made a glory, of such insolence —
> I thought, — such domineering deity
> Hephaistos might have carved to cut the brine
> For his gay brother's prow, imbrue that path
> Which, purpling, recognised the conqueror.
> Impudent and majestic: drunk, perhaps,
> But that 's religion; sense too plainly snuffed:
> Still, sensuality was grown a rite.

Aristophanes, sobering himself by a powerful effort of will, greets Balaustion half-mockingly, half deferentially. He is bidden to enter. The night is passed in an argument between Balaustion and Aristophanes, the main point of contention being the merits of Euripides as contrasted

with his critic, Aristophanes; but the discussion covers the wide field of the genesis, development, and functions of Comedy, with suggestions of its relation to Tragedy.

Aristophanes begins by attacking Euripides, but is soon thrown back on self-defence, and the argument of Balaustion culminates finally in her reading to him the 'Herakles.' At the conclusion of the reading, after a few words more, Aristophanes departs. Having thus recalled in detail the whole discussion, Balaustion, with the added light of the intervening year's experience, sums up the controversy in a noble passage, which ends the argument and the poem.

I forbear giving a consecutive report and analysis of the argument, and content myself, for the present, with making several somewhat desultory remarks.

In the first place, naturally, since he speaks primarily as a poet and not as a critic, Browning makes little explicit statement of his critical judgment on Euripides in either of these poems. His feeling for the tragic Greek is strong and pervasive, and the dramatic unfolding of the two poems, especially of the later one, reveals his judgment with much greater force than any formal prose criticism could command. But in both poems there are passages or sentences here and there that disclose the nature of his judgment as by a flash. These, of course, are less numerous in 'Balaustion's Adventure' than they are in 'Aristophanes' Apology;' for the motives of the two poems are different, that of the latter being distinctly apologetic, in the strict logical sense of the term. The latter poem is also far wider in scope, as well as greater in bulk and power, than the former.

Thus, in 'Balaustion's Adventure,' he characterises Euripides as

> The meteoric poet of air and sea,
> Planets and the pale populace of heaven,
> The mind of man, and all that 's made to soar.

In answer to those Athenians who

wondered strangers were exorbitant
In estimation of Euripides.
He was not Aischulos nor Sophokles,

he makes Balaustion say: —

Men love him not:
How should they? Nor do they much love his friend
Sokrates: but those two have fellowship;
Sokrates often comes to hear him read,
And never misses if he teach a piece.
Both, being old, will soon have company,
Sit with their peers above the talk.

Browning clearly accepts the judgment of his wife as his own, in lines that are full of tender reminiscence: —

Honour the great name!
All cannot love two great names; yet some do:
I know the poetess who graved in gold,
Among her glories that shall never fade,
This style and title for Euripides,
The Human with his droppings of warm tears.

It is significant that he quotes this last line twice in his poem. In the concluding paragraph, after he has noticed Sir Frederick Leighton's famous picture, — a picture that, with all its merit, is indebted to Browning for a considerable part of its fame, — he thus makes Balaustion express his appreciation of Euripides' play: —

And all came, — glory of the golden verse,
And passion of the picture, and that fine
Frank outgush of the human gratitude
Which saved our ship and me, in Syracuse, —
Ay, and the tear or two which slipt perhaps
Away from you, friends, while I told my tale,
— It all came of this play that gained no prize!
Why crown whom Zeus has crowned in soul before?

In 'Aristophanes' Apology' there are many lines that are telltale of Browning's subtle and profound appreciation of Euripides. When Euthukles returned to his home from the streets of Athens, with news of Euripides' death, he

entered, grave,
Grand, may I say, as who brings laurel-branch
And message from the tripod: such it proved.

Balaustion, who is recounting the incident, continues: —

He first removed the garland from his brow,
Then took my hand and looked into my face.

"Speak good words!" much misgiving faltered I.

"Good words, the best, Balaustion. He is crowned,
Gone with his Attic ivy home to feast,
Since Aischulos required companionship.
Pour a libation for Euripides!"

When we had sat the heavier silence out —
"Dead and triumphant still!" began reply
To my eye's question. "As he willed, he worked:
And, as he worked, he wanted not, be sure,
Triumph his whole life through, submitting work
To work's right judges, never to the wrong,
To competency, not ineptitude."

The words with which Euthukles concludes his comment on the tragic poet's work are full of suggestion on the point before us: —

Euripides
Last the old hand on the old phorminx flung,
Clashed thence 'Alkaion,' maddened 'Pentheus' up;
Then music sighed itself away, one moan
Iphigeneia made by Aulis' strand;
With her and music died Euripides.

Later in the poem, after demonstrating to Aristophanes the fruitlessness of his confessed attempts to overthrow certain ones whom he considers a menace to society and the State, Balaustion says: —

. . . The statues stand — mud-stained at most —
Titan or pygmy: what achieves their fall
Will be, long after mud is flung and spent,
Some clear thin spirit-thrust of lightning — truth!

A little later she says: —

So much for you!
Now, the antagonist Euripides —
Has he succeeded better? Who shall say?
He spoke quite o'er the heads of Kleon's crowd
To a dim future.

In some lines which he makes Balaustion suggest to Aristophanes, Browning seems to indicate that Euripides, joined with the Comic Poet, at his best, is the true precursor of Shakespeare, the

Imaginary Third
Who, stationed (by mechanics past my guess)
So as to take in every side at once,
And not successively, — may reconcile
The High and Low in tragic-comic verse, —
He shall be hailed superior to us both
When born — in the Tin-islands!

In these lines Browning consciously, or unconsciously, echoes the sentiment of the profound and prophetic remark of Socrates, ascribed to him in the 'Symposium,' that "the genius of Comedy was the same as that of Tragedy, and that the writer of tragedy ought to be a writer of comedy also." To some extent, at least, Euripides fulfilled this idea.

In the conclusion of the poem, by a curious anachronism, unless we construe the passage as a prophecy, Browning makes Balaustion refer to the famous remark of Philemon, the founder of the New Attic School of Comedy, who was not yet born. The passage is somewhat long, but its value in determining our poet's estimate of Euripides is so great, and it is so full of his own peculiar suggestiveness, that I shall be justified in quoting the whole. Balaustion has just described the burial-place of Euripides, —

He lies now in the little valley, laughed
And moaned about by those mysterious streams,
Boiling and freezing, like the love and hate
Which helped or harmed him through his earthly course.

Then, after a few words recounting her disposition of "the tablets and the psalterion," Euripides' farewell gift to her, she exclaims: —

> And see if young Philemon, — sure one day
> To do good service and be loved himself, —
> If he too have not made a votive verse!
> "Grant, in good sooth, our great dead, all the same,
> Retain their sense, as certain wise men say,
> I 'd hang myself — to see Euripides."
> Hands off, Philemon! nowise hang thyself,
> But pen the prime plays, labour the right life,
> And die at good old age as grand men use, —
> Keeping thee, with that great thought, warm the while, —
> That he does live, Philemon! Ay, most sure!
> "He lives!" hark, — waves say, winds sing out the same,
> And yonder dares the citied ridge of Rhodes
> Its headlong plunge from sky to sea, disparts
> North bay from south, — each guarded calm, that guest
> May enter gladly, blow what wind there will, —
> Boiled round with breakers, to no other cry!
> All in one choros, — what the master-word
> They take up? hark! "There are no gods, no gods!
> Glory to God — who saves Euripides!"

So our poet declares the Greek poet's immortality and absolves him from the Aristophanic charge of atheism, by subtly suggesting the deep theism which underlies his scepticism as to the gods of the common faith.

My second remark is, that Browning preferred Euripides to both of his great predecessors, Æschylus and Sophocles, — the latter, though a contemporary in point of time, was really a predecessor in the form and spirit of his work. This preference is unmistakably and strongly shown both in the translations of the 'Alkestis' and the 'Herakles,' and in the entire dramatic action and argument of the two poems. The reasons for it are not difficult to find. Euripides was much more humane in his work than either of the others. He had far more knowledge of human nature; his characters are real men and women, expressing something of the actual thought and

passion of contemporary life, even his deities sharing in the common feeling, instead of being conventional symbols of the dramatist's ideas. Sophocles is said to have remarked that he represented men as they ought to be, while Euripides represented them as they are. It is true that Euripides, though confined to the narrow circle of themes prescribed by the conventional law of the Greek drama, made the action of his plays a transcript of life as he saw it. Psychologically, Euripides presents a much more difficult and a more interesting problem than either Æschylus or Sophocles. He was more complex in intellect and character. His mind, cultivated and widened in view by all the learning of his time, was also full of the uncertainty and unrest of his time. He expressed the intellectual and moral transition, through which, in the latter half of his life, Greece was passing, putting into his dramas its perplexity, its scepticism, and both its desire for truth and its demand for novelty.

All this appealed strongly to a mind like Browning's, which gathers up into itself all the intellectual eagerness, the doubt, the passion for truth, the perplexity and the aspiration of our own time. It may have been, too, that he found a point of sympathetic contact with Euripides in the latter's interpretation and expression of woman in such characters as Alkestis, Makaria, Polyxena, Elektra, and Iphigeneia.

Euripides' treatment of the gods was new and startling among poets. In his plays, they are no longer, as in the works of Æschylus, mere symbols, but real personalities, akin to man, and sometimes even questionable personalities. He "shrank not to teach," says Balaustion, that,

> If gods be strong and wicked, man, though weak,
> May prove their match by willing to be good.

In the 'Herakles' he makes Amphitruon say: —

> O Zeus, . . .
> In vain I called thee father of my child!

Thou wast less friendly far than thou didst seem.
I, the mere man, o'ermatch in virtue thee
The mighty god: for I have not betrayed
The Herakleian children, . . .
. . . when it comes to help
Thy loved ones, there thou lackest wit indeed!
Thou art some stupid god, or born unjust.

The hero, after he has recovered from his madness, gives to Theseus an account of his labours and sufferings, which he charges to the enmity of Heré, and then exclaims: —

Who would pray
To such a goddess? — that, begrudging Zeus
Because he loved a woman, ruins me —
Lover of Hellas, faultless of the wrong!

In answer to his passionate outburst, Theseus cynically replies: —

None, none of mortals boasts a fate unmixed,
Nor gods — if poets' teaching be not false.
Have not they joined in wedlock against law
With one another? not, for sake of rule,
Branded their sires in bondage? Yet they house,
All the same, in Olumpos, carry heads
High there, notorious sinners though they be!

To this Herakles responds with protest, in which is mingled, however, the inevitable doubt: —

Ah me, these words are foreign to my woes!
I neither fancy gods love lawless beds,
Nor, that with chains they bind each other's hands,
Have I judged worthy faith, at any time;
Nor shall I be persuaded — one is born
His fellows' master! since God stands in need —
If he is really God — of nought at all.

In Euripides, also, the stern and awful sense of Nemesis, which so profoundly characterises the plays of the older dramatists, is softened into a sad sense of the mysterious vicissitudes of life.

In many important particulars, Euripides' mind was more akin to that of the modern man, and his dramatic

genius was far less removed from the many-sidedness of Shakespeare than were the mind and art of any other poet of his time. He not only reflected his age but he also anticipated the coming spirit.

"Euripides," says Bury, "was the first Greek who pointed beyond the Greek to a new world; the beginnings of the modern spirit appear in him."

It is equally clear that Browning much preferred the "Euripidean art and aims to the Aristophanic naturalism." With the inevitable instinct of the true poet he appreciated and admired Aristophanes' boldness, vigour, satiric power, and lyrical charm but he detested his immitigable coarseness, his outrageous buffoonery, and, above all, his frequent offences against truth. It was

> the cold iron malice, the launched lie
> Whence heavenly fire has withered,

that roused his ire. Aristophanes, in his attacks on Euripides, passed all bounds of legitimate satire, and Browning shows his resentment of this, particularly in the fine passage which he puts into the lips of Balaustion, beginning with: —

> Aristophanes!
> The stranger-woman sues in her abode —
> "Be honoured as our guest!" But, call it — shrine,
> Then "No dishonour to the Daimon!" bids
> The priestess, "or expect dishonour's due!" —

and ending thus: —

> But, throw off hate's celestiality, —
> Show me, apart from song-flash and wit-flame,
> A mere man's hand ignobly clenched against
> Yon supreme calmness, — and I interpose,
> Such as you see me! Silk breaks lightning's blow!

It appears again later in the discussion, in Balaustion's caustic comment on Aristophanes' claim that if he used muck it was only to fight truth's battle against the sophists.

> Friend, sophist-hating! know, — worst sophistry
> Is when man's own soul plays its own self false,
> Reasons a vice into a virtue.

And the Browning temper shows unmistakably in her conclusion: —

> But I trust truth's inherent kingliness,
> Trust who, by reason of much truth, shall reign
> More or less royally — may prayer but push
> His sway past limit, purge the false from true.

My third remark is, that, in the picturesque and exquisitely varied expression of his preference for Euripides, Browning has the rare merit of doing no injustice to the other Greek dramatists. Even in his treatment of Aristophanes, whose coarseness he loathes and whose insincerity he exposes with consummate skill, he does not fail of a just appreciation of the real genius and strength of that marvellous but unlovely Titan of Greek Comedy.

In the two poems, 'Balaustion's Adventure' and 'Aristophanes' Apology,' Euripides is exhibited in the most attractive light. It is a fair question: Has Browning justly and adequately represented Euripides? It has been intimated by Symonds that he is guilty of special pleading, that he has, in a word, to some extent idealised his favourite Greek poet. The intimation, however, is not serious, nor is it pressed. On the whole it is my conviction that Browning's judgment, with perhaps some slight reduction of the high colour which Balaustion's feminine devotion imparts, will stand. But how about his translations? Of the 'Herakles' there can be no question. As a translation it leaves almost nothing to be desired in faithfulness to the original. In this respect it serves as a model for the ablest workers in the field of translation from the Greek classics.

A question remains as to the 'Alkestis.' In his rendering of this exquisite drama, has Browning fairly interpreted Euripides? In one instance, at least, this has been

answered in the negative. The single point, or at least the main point, of criticism is his representation of the character of Admetos as that appears in connection with the substitutionary death of his wife. In a paper read before the London Browning Society, in 1891, and afterwards published in the Society's Papers, Mr. R. G. Moulton took strong ground on the negative side of this question. The title of his paper is a succinct expression of his judgment: 'Balaustion's Adventure as a Beautiful Misrepresentation of the Original;' and he begins with the frank avowal: "My position is that Browning, in common with the greater part of modern readers, has entirely misread and misrepresented Euripides' play of 'Alcestis.'"

With all deference to Mr. Moulton, as a superior classical scholar, I contend that Browning's transcript is not a misrepresentation of the Greek dramatist. Mr. Moulton's argument turns mainly on the assumption that Alkestis died for the State, and not merely for her husband; and he finds an important, indeed the chief, dramatic motive of the play in the glorification of hospitality, of which Admetos is presented as an eminent example. He contends, further, that Admetos was not selfish in allowing the substitution of Alkestis for himself, and that he endeavoured to save her, but was unable to do so because Fate had decreed her death and there could be no second substitution.

Now, in the first place, it is impossible to maintain, from the play, that Alkestis dies for the State. Her death is not a sacrifice like that of Menoikeus in the 'Phœnissæ,' or that of Iphigeneia in the 'Iphigeneia in Aulis' which Mr. Moulton cites, or even like that of Polyxena in the 'Hecuba.' Of the 'Alkestis' Mahaffy says: "In this play the heroine voluntarily resigns her life under no pressure of misfortune, with no lofty patriotic enthusiasm, but simply to save the life of her husband, for whom Apollo has obtained the permission of an exchange."[1]

[1] 'Classical Writers, Euripides,' Mahaffy, p. 94.

Mr. Moulton says: "We celebrate as a brave patriot the soldier who dies in his country's battle, but had he hesitated we should have called him a traitor and a coward. So it was glorious of Alcestis to die for her royal husband: but she herself applies the term 'treachery' to the thought of refusing." Unfortunately for his argument, the passage which he cites utterly fails to sustain it. Alkestis dies for Admetos, not as the head of the State, but as her husband and the father and natural protector of her children, rather than live, a widow, without him, or form a new union. It is not even for love of Admetos that she dies; for while she shows a high sense of wifely duty, there is no trace of any passionate fondness for her weak and selfish husband. "She represents," says Mahaffy, "that peculiar female heroism, which obeys the demands of affection in the form of family ties, as the dictates of the highest moral law. We see these, the heroines of common life, around us in all classes of society. But I venture to assert that in no case does this heroic devotion of self-sacrifice come out into such really splendid relief, as when it is made for selfish and worthless people." [1]

In the passage which Mr. Moulton cites, Alkestis thus addresses her marriage bed: —

> Farewell: to thee
> No blame do I impute, for me alone
> Hast thou destroyed; disdaining to betray
> Thee, and my lord, I die.

She recognises her doom as the decree of the Fates, and accepts it; yet, in accepting it, protests her freedom to have chosen otherwise, and mildly reproaches Admetos' parents, either one of whom reasonably, considering their almost spent lives, might have accepted the lot of death and saved both him and her. I quote from Potter's translation of the play: —

[1] 'Greek Classical Literature,' Mahaffy, Vol. I., Part II., p. 103.

Thou seest, Admetos, what to me the Fates
Assign; yet, ere I die, I wish to tell thee
What lies most near my heart. I honour'd thee,
And in exchange for thine my forfeit-life
Devoted; now I die for thee, though free
Not to have died; but from Thessalia's Chiefs
Preferring whom I pleased in royal state,
To have lived happy here: I had no will
To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans.
I die without reluctance, though the gifts
Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me.
Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,
Deserted thee, though well it had beseem'd them
With honour to have died for thee, to have saved
Their son with honour, glorious in their death.
They had no child but thee, they had no hope
Of other offspring, shouldst thou die; and I
Might thus have lived, thou mightst have lived till age
Crept slowly on, nor wouldst thou heave the sigh
Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone
Thy orphan children.

Contrast these last words with those of Menoikeus, who is about to sacrifice himself in order to save Thebes. The city is besieged, and Tiresias has revealed to Creon that the city can be saved only by the sacrifice of Menoikeus, Creon's son. Creon feigns assent, but, when alone with his son, urges the latter to fly. Menoikeus, in his turn, seems to accede to his father's wishes, but the moment he is left to himself he announces his resolution to make the sacrifice, and save Thebes.

With an honest fraud my words
Have calmed my father's fears, effecting thence
My purpose. Distant far he bids me fly,
Robbing his country of its fortune, me
To cowardice assigning: to his age
This may be pardon'd; but for me, should I
Betray my country, whence I drew my breath,
There could be no forgiveness. Be assured,
I go to save my country; for this land
Freely I give my life. . . .
. . . This is my firm resolve.
To death devoted, no inglorious offering,
I go to save, to free this suffering land.

Contrast also the last words of Alkestis with those of Iphigeneia: —

> Hear then what to my mind
> Deliberate thought presents: it is decreed
> For me to die: this then I wish, to die
> With glory, all reluctance banish'd far.
> My mother, weigh this well, that what I speak
> Is honour's dictate: all the powers of Greece
> Have now their eyes on me; on me depends
> The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy:
> . . . . . .
> . . . To be too fond of life
> Becomes not me; nor for thyself alone,
> But to all Greece a blessing didst thou bear me.
> . . . For Greece I give my life.
> Slay me; demolish Troy; for these shall be
> Long time my monuments, my children these,
> My nuptials, and my glory.

No such note as sounds through both of these speeches is heard in the final utterances of Alkestis. Neither she nor Admetos says one word, throughout the play, intimating that Alkestis' death was a sacrifice for the State. Not even does the chorus, which almost inevitably discloses the real motive of a Greek play, hint that Alkestis' death is a sacrifice for the State. After she has disappeared, the chorus, commenting on her deed, sings: —

> For thou, O best of women, thou alone,
> For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.
> Light lie the earth upon that gentle breast,
> And be thou ever bless'd!
> . . . . . .
> When, to avert his doom,
> His mother in the earth refused to lie;
> Nor would his ancient father die
> To save his son from an untimely tomb;
> Though the hand of time had spread
> Hoar hairs o'er each aged head;
> In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,
> The darksome way thou daredst to go,
> And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life.
> Be mine so true a wife,
> Though rare the lot: then should I prove
> The indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

The last line is weighty with meaning, and it is directly opposed to Mr. Moulton's theory of the play.

Even in the passage in which, after Alkestis has gone, Admetos bewails his lot, declares that he ought not to live, and confesses his own cowardly baseness, and in which he certainly would have urged, in self-defence, so important a consideration as the good of the State, had that been involved, he has no word to say about the State. His sorrow grows bitter with compunction and the beginnings, at least, of self-contempt, as he anticipates the way in which men, all too truthfully, will speak of him.

> And if one hates me, he will say: "Behold
> The man who basely lives, who dared not die;
> But giving, through the meanness of his soul,
> His wife, avoided death, yet would be deem'd
> A man: he hates his parents, yet himself
> Had not the spirit to die." These ill reports
> Cleave to me: why then wish for longer life,
> On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days?

If Alkestis' death was not a sacrifice for the State, then there is no shred of reason left for doubt that Admetos (notwithstanding his admitted virtue of hospitality, a virtue which selfish men not infrequently have) was both weak and selfish in accepting the substitution of his wife for himself. Such Euripides represents him, and such Browning, in his transcript of Euripides' play, represents him, only, perhaps, with increased vividness. Mr. Moulton's argument, that, Fate having decreed the death of Alkestis, Admetos is helpless to save her, even if he wished to do so, by himself submitting to the doom, goes too far; the same argument would prove that even Herakles could not rescue her.

Mr. W. B. Donne, in his excellent little volume on Euripides,[1] says: "Admetus makes almost as poor a figure in this play as Jason does in the 'Medea.' Self-preservation is the leading feature in his character. He loves

[1] In the series of 'Ancient Classics for English Readers,' pp. 83, 84.

Alcestis much, but he loves himself more. . . . When the inexorable missive comes for her, he is indeed deeply cast down: yet even then there is not a spark of manliness in him."

Mr. Berdoe, in his useful 'Browning Cyclopædia,' has done Browning marked injustice in giving, as the only comment on his rendering of the 'Alkestis,' a long digest of Mr. Moulton's paper, and the single remark: "The design of this tragedy is to recommend the virtue of hospitality, so sacred among the Grecians, and encouraged on political grounds, as well as to keep alive a generous and social benevolence." On the point of the glorification of hospitality in the 'Alkestis' it is important to observe that the hospitality of Admetos is represented in Browning's version of the play quite as strongly as it is in the original.

It seems unnecessary to spend any more time on Mr. Moulton's argument, for if his contention breaks down at the single point of the motive of Alkestis' self-sacrifice, as I venture to think it does, its force is gone as a demonstration of Browning's misrepresentation of Euripides.

On one point, however, I linger for a moment. Mr. Moulton says: "The foundation, the turning-point, and the consummation of the plot are all made by Euripides to rest upon the hospitality of Admetos." He is not quite consistent, however, for near the conclusion of his paper he affirms that he considers "the real motive of the play, the conception which underlies the whole, and welds the separate parts into a unity," to be "a contrast, not between two characters — the selfish Admetus and the devoted Alcestis — but between two ideals: the ancient ideal of public splendour, and the modern ideal of domestic love." But here he abandons his main idea of the voluntary self-sacrifice of Alkestis for the sake of the State, and even his positive affirmation that "the foundation, the turning-point, and the consummation of the plot are all made by Euripides

to rest upon the hospitality of Admetus." In his later statement, as to a conflict between two ideals constituting "the real motive of the play" there is some truth, but it entirely defeats his contention that Browning has misrepresented Euripides. May not "the real motive of the play" have been deeper still? May not Euripides, not denying, but implicitly recognising the common ideals both of devotion to the State and of hospitality, really have sought to set forth the very thought which Browning has so finely developed, namely, the contrast between the selfishness of Admetos and the self-sacrifice of Alkestis, and the regeneration of Admetos' character by the discipline of the tragic experience through which he passed, leading him to self-knowledge, repentance, and the attainment of a nobler spirit? If this be a fair conjecture, as I think it is, it vindicates the fidelity of Browning in interpreting the Greek poet through his own deep poetic feeling and insight. Instead of "the assumption of selfishness in Admetos reducing the story to an artistic and moral chaos, in which a god at the beginning and a demigod at the close set themselves to work miracles in the sole interest of a weak and heartless man," as Mr. Moulton declares it does, it gives to the drama the unity of the moral regeneration of a king who is "weak and heartless" because he is predominantly selfish.

But these poems have a value apart from their merit as representations of Euripides. In the story of Balaustion Browning has seized upon two incidents of exceptional dramatic interest, — one, the release of Athenian prisoners because they were able to recite passages from Euripides' plays, which seems to be authentic; the other, the modification of Lysander's iconoclastic resolution because a man of Phokis, present at the council of the Spartan and allied generals, recited a passage from the 'Electra,' for the authenticity of which we have, at least, the testimony of Plutarch. These incidents Browning has utilised with

consummate art, making them critical moments in the development of his poems.

Though each poem is distinct and complete in itself, they unite in a Balaustion-epic, the interest of which does not fail from beginning to end, while throughout we find much of Browning's characteristic lyric beauty, dramatic power, skill in portraiture, love of truth, and invincible optimism.

THE GREEK SPIRIT IN SHELLEY AND BROWNING.

By VIDA D. SCUDDER.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, April 22, 1896.]

THE Spirit of the Age is mighty; but the spirits of all time are mightier yet. Looking backward, we love to play with antitheses, and to set century off against century. Looking inward, we note with seeming glee the symptoms of our own decadence. Novelty, novelty! is our cry: give us at any cost the distinctive, the peculiar. But all the time, while we chatter about that which passes, Nature busies herself with that which endures. Serene and unifying artistic forces move unobtrusively through the ages, binding our petty self-expression into a wider harmony. To follow their interplay is to penetrate far into the secrets of the intellectual loves of our race.

One of the most important of these enduring influences makes toward us no doubt from classic shores, from the shores of Hellas: —

> If Greece must be
> A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
> And build themselves again impregnably
> In a diviner clime,
> To Amphionic music, on some cape sublime,
> Which frowns above the idle foam of time.

So sang Shelley, and the "diviner clime" where Hellas melodiously builds herself ever-renewed habitations, is the clime of poetry. Very early the Greek spirit showed, in its reaction on Roman literature, its intense power to modify, almost to recreate, an alien genius. The more

powerful force of Christianity checked it in seeming, but received from it unconsciously more than was realised. Coming in with a rush at the Renascence, the Hellenic influence has from that time, in spite of the Hebraising eddy of Puritanism, never failed to hold its own, even if we are not quite prepared to claim with Matthew Arnold that it has on the whole dominated civilisation, out of England, for the last three hundred years. A vivid Pagan revival has, at all events, marked our own day. The Greek impulse has reached us directly, through the original sources, instead of filtering through French and Latin, as it did in the last century. Owing to countless subtle spiritual causes also, it has wrought entirely different results from those produced either in the sixteenth or in the eighteenth century. To the literary student the chief interest in tracing the movement of a great artistic force like that of the Greek ideal through the world, is to note not only its advance, but also and chiefly its successive modifications as it blends with the mood of various periods. It is always fascinating to dwell on the wedding of Faust and Helen. Helen is immortal; but each generation sees a new Faust, and Euphorion, the offspring of that wedlock, reappears with quite new features from age to age.

Nothing can be more delightful than to watch the various results of the action of classic influence in the time, say, of Spenser, the time of Addison, the time of Swinburne and Leconte de Lisle. But we are not to explore so wide a territory to-day; we are simply to study classic influences in the work of two of the great moderns, — Shelley and Browning. The subject is broad enough still; for with Shelley we have Hellenism at work in revolutionary times, with Browning in the age of Victoria; with Shelley we have a disciple of Greece, with Browning a critic; with Shelley we watch classical influence at play in a nature essentially lyrical, with Browning in a nature essentially dramatic. Yet Browning by his own reverent

claim is the spiritual successor of Shelley. It is significant that these are the two great moderns in whom Hellenism is most vital and vivid. So dæmonic is the spirit of Greece, that it has a way of accenting the master-passion of each successive age. The time of Addison revelled in the correctness, finality, exquisite moderation which it found in the classic ideal. Following this lead, we should expect Wordsworth and Tennyson, high-minded teachers of obedience and law, to preserve the serene and symmetrical classical tradition. Yet Tennyson and Wordsworth treat Greek subjects seldom and from afar. It is Shelley, it is Browning, who turn most eagerly for inspiration to the ancient world. These poets, each in his own way an impassioned votary of Freedom, express the onward-sweeping force of a century whose watchword is not Conservation but Advance. They find in classicism no gospel of the proprieties. Their instinct for revolt, their audacity of temper, their brilliant spontaneity, seize on quite a different aspect of Greek life, — the life, after all, of a nation made up of dreamers, sea-rovers, and fighters quite as much as of law-givers; a nation always trying experiments in art and government, and notable from the very fact that it shook itself free at the outset from oriental stability, and joyously faced the world's future. We are to study the affinity for this Greece of our two most adventurous modern natures. And first we take Shelley, bright young herald of revolution, in whom our great epoch of expansion found its most buoyant prophet.

We are tempted to say that had Greece not existed Shelley would have invented it, so curiously did his nature conform to the Hellenic type, despite the romantic fantasies of his youth. At once subtle and childlike, he was a bright estray in our modern world, akin to the beautiful keen-witted youths of the Platonic dialogues, and bewildered as they might be by his modern environment. Our moral perceptions nowadays have a trick of becom-

ing more subtle than our thought; hence our uncomfortable pre-occupation with problems. In Shelley, as in the Greeks, it is quite the other way; a wonderful, childlike simplicity of moral instinct is joined to clear and keen intellectual power, "this way and that dividing the swift mind." Son of light as he was, the Gothic and Christian obsession with sin and struggle was wholly alien to Shelley. Rarely was he beset by problems; his quick thought darted contentedly to its convictions, and rested there. His very style was Greek. Surely there are no other "wingèd words" in English so luminous, penetrating, pure. Says Walter Bagehot: —

> The peculiarity of his style is its intellectuality. . . . Over the most intense excitement, the grandest objects, the keenest agony, the most buoyant joy, he throws an air of subtle mind. . . . At the dizziest height of meaning the keenness of the words is greatest. It was from Plato and Sophocles, doubtless, that he gained the last perfection in preserving the accuracy of the intellect in treating of the objects of imagination; but in its essence it was a peculiarity of his own nature.

Such a nature must, sooner or later, find its home in the great classic tradition. During his impetuous boyhood Shelley was under the sway of the French eighteenth-century philosophers; but his mind was wistful and exiled till it found its true fatherland in Greece. The author of 'Epipsychidion' could not remain a follower of Voltaire. In 1815, he read Plato in the original. The master was discovered, and at once, as it seems, the genius of the disciple broke into blossom; for this was the first year of Shelley's mature greatness, the year of 'Alastor.' From this time the classic influence was dominant with him. It reached him through many channels, through plastic beauty, history, scenery, as well as through books; but of course literature was its chief instrument. Shelley was no erudite pedant. He read Greek as a man of letters, not

a scholar; but he read it enthusiastically, constantly, with remarkable swiftness and ease. The little volume of Æschylus, found in his pocket after death, bore witness to a life-long fellowship. He knew well Homer, Aristophanes, the tragedians, the idyllic and elegiac poets, less well the historians; and all these, but above all his beloved master, Plato, penetrated his mind as intimately as light the air. His sober estimate of Greek civilisation is found in passage after passage of his prose writings. "The study of modern history," he says, "is the study of kings, financiers, statesmen, and priests. The history of ancient Greece is the study of legislators, philosophers, and poets; it is the history of men compared to the history of titles. What the Greeks were was a reality, not a promise. And what we are and hope to be is derived, as it were, from the influence and inspiration of those glorious generations." [1] Shelley roamed far and wide with impassioned joy through many literatures; now Dante, now Goethe, now Calderon, made him dizzy with delight. But from all these friendly excursions he returned with deepened reverence to his lords and masters, the Greeks.

Lords and masters, indeed, in no pedantic sense. Shelley treats his classics with a splendidly audacious fellowship, hailing them delightedly as comrades across a whole intervening civilisation. It is a proof of the spontaneous and instinctive nature of his classicism that his poetry does not set to work to imitate Greek models. He translates the pastoral poets, and blends their exquisite utterances with his own elegiac strain in the 'Adonais;' he serenely adopts and reshapes for his own purposes the Promethean myth. But never would it occur to him laboriously to concoct a so-called "classical drama," copied point by point from the old form, like Arnold's 'Merope,' or Swinburne's 'Erechtheus.' He treats his material in quite a different way, with sweet, frank mastership. He sighs not after vanished gods, like

[1] Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients relative to the Subject of Love.

our later neo-pagans. Why should he? From him, at least, they have never withdrawn their gracious company. Nay, he can create with his mere breath new denizens of Olympus. Nothing is more striking indeed, in our revolutionary poets, than their mythopœic instinct. As a merry breeze from far hill-pastures blows into a still drawing-room, this fresh instinct swept into the *blasé* traditions of the eighteenth century. The halls of poetry were filled with courtly folk, dancing minuets, or sipping scandal with their tea; in a few years the halls melted away, and poetry found itself in the forest, peopled with dryads, and visited by immortals. Keats and Shelley were her chief guides in this fresh woodsy world of antiquity and childhood. Their imagination has something primeval and cosmic; it touches the old myths, which had become stock-in-trade of the versifier, myths of Phœbus, Aurora, Aphrodite, and they laugh into life. Shelley's 'Arethusa,' his 'Hymn of Pan,' his 'Hymn of Apollo,' are serene and alive with conviction.

> The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
> Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries
> From the broad moonlight of the sky,
> Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,
> Waken me when their Mother, the grey Dawn,
> Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.
>
> Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
> I walk over the mountains and the waves,
> Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
> My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
> Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
> Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.
> . . . . . .
> I am the eye with which the Universe
> Beholds itself, and knows itself divine;
> All harmony of instrument or verse,
> All prophecy, all medicine, are mine,
> All light of Art or Nature; — to my song,
> Victory and praise in their own right belong.

What could be more nobly, more entirely classic?

Often the myth-impulse is evidenced in new, exquisite creations. A poem like 'The Cloud' is trembling into myth throughout: —

> That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call the Moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> With the midnight breezes strewn;
> And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
> Which only the angels hear,
> May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
> The stars peep behind her and peer;
> And I laugh to see them whirl and flee
> Like a swarm of golden bees,
> While I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
> Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
> Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
> Are all paved with the moon and with these.

Nothing could witness more delightfully to the inherent classicism of Shelley's genius than the ease with which these new incarnations of ideas which the Greek would not have conceived, blend in mystical and perfect harmony with real Greek gods and goddesses. This fusion is, of course, most obvious in the 'Prometheus Unbound,' that strange drama where images drawn from the classic past mingle with fair dreams of a yet unrealised future, all to reveal the abiding, present, modern form of suffering Humanity. The early parts of the drama have passages purely Hellenic; the last act sweeps us upward, with no violent break, into a scientific attitude emphatically modern. Apollo, Mercury, and Faunus meet on equal terms the embodiments of modern Pantheism, and echoes of a music yet unborn float through the valley-glades of antiquity.

Shelley moves in the world of classical imagination with the free grace of a native of the air. But we are only at the beginning of our study. Greek by instinct, he is also Greek by thought. And here we part company with Keats, whose pagan impulse, purely innate, was nourished from no more original spring than a Dictionary of Mythology.

It is wonderful enough that 'Endymion' and 'Hyperion' should have had no other suggestion. Keats' lovely myths "tease us out of thought as doth eternity." His neo-paganism is purely æsthetic. In Shelley, on the other hand, the intellect as well as the imagination was possessed with Hellenic influences, and the innate Greek instinct was reinforced by long study and impassioned contemplation. We may trace his classic feeling in three ways; his poetry is permeated by Greek conceptions of beauty, by the Greek ideal of freedom, and by the Platonic philosophy.

Shelley's charming 'Letters of Travel' show what a spell was cast upon him by classic antiquity, and especially by Greek art. The statues in the Italian galleries left him without words, transported out of reach of time and of decay. In scenery his imagination craved and claimed the most classic elements. He never visited Greece; but in southern Italy he found loveliness of a similar type, and bathed his spirit in it. There are few more splendid bits of English prose than the letter in which Shelley describes his visit to the Temples of Pæstum — as yet uninvaded by the tourist; and the Bay of Naples became instantly a part of his mental life. These influences play through all his poetic work in subtle under-suggestion. Shelley, in describing, deals very little with form or outline; his effects are wrought in colour, atmosphere, and fragrance, and constantly tremble into subjectivity. Yet in all his vaporous pictures there is the implied presence of a classic ideal. Wide reaches of azure ocean, broken by fair mountain-islands and promontories temple-crowned, form his backgrounds. In these scenes with their lovely desolation his genius is as much at home as Wordsworth's in green English fields. Through a classical landscape, irradiated by that light which is of no time, wander his dream-creations, and their forms are those of the statues of the Italian galleries, endowed with breathing grace. Laon, Lionel, all Shelley's young champions of freedom, are of

the family of Harmodius and Aristogiton, and have the bright daring and beauty of the heroes of the youth of the world. Suggestions from the lovely reliefs to be seen at Naples and elsewhere may be traced through the poems — as where Panthea and Ione sit with folded wings and delicate grace at the feet of the Titan, or Cythna, standing on the steps of the great Altar of the Federation, white against bluest heaven, chants in the presence of the triumphant procession her Ode to Freedom. Shelley rarely treats of old age. For him, as for the Greeks, life belongs to the young. But his few old men — he never gave us an old woman, except Mother Earth — Zonoras in 'Prince Athanase,' the Hermit in 'The Revolt of Islam' — are august, venerable, simple, like the classic statues of age. Least sculptural of poets, in a way, his work is yet haunted by memories of classic sculpture.

Shelley's affinity for Greek form is never more evident, or more unconscious, than in his great tragedy, 'The Cenci.' He meant to follow the minor Elizabethans. But the whole thing is utterly remote from the lawless romantic temper. The stately relentless tragic movement, unrelieved by play of mixed motive or note of humour or fancy, witnesses no less than the highly abstract method of character-treatment to a really antique instinct. Beatrice is sister to Antigone, not to the Duchess of Malfi, and it is as futile to criticise the absence of the modern psychological method in Shelley as in Sophocles.

Greece did more for Shelley than to form his æsthetic ideals. She was not only a vision of beauty; she was "the Mother of the Free." In political and social passion, he was a true son of the victors of Marathon. One is sometimes tempted to say that he never went any further. This would be quite unjust, in view of his intense intuition of the wide commonalty of love, and of that passionate championship of the weak which is so essential to his faith, so alien to the temper of Hellas. Yet it remains true that

there is something singularly classic in his revolutionary ardours, in their simplicity and wholeness, their disregard of obstacles, their ignorance of modern conditions. His poetry glows and sings and vibrates with invocations to Liberty, and he is never tired of glorifying Greece for her part in the manifestation of this divine Power. We all remember the splendid passages in the first Canto of 'The Revolt of Islam' and in the majestic 'Ode to Liberty.' In this last poem, by the way, Shelley gives us a really noble reading of history, and a more evolutionary conception of the advance of Freedom than he elsewhere shows. But on the whole, his idea of Liberty is nearer that of Leonidas than that either of the modern constitutional reformer, or of the social democrat. His friendship with Prince Mavrocordato, and his enthusiasm for the Greek war of independence, finally inspired him to the splendid lyrical outburst of 'Hellas,' — a poem in which his impassioned loyalty to Greece and his sense of her high mission find supremely beautiful expression: —

Semi-chorus. I. With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew;

II. With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew;

I. With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through Time;

II. And at thy resurrection
Reappeareth, like thou, sublime!

I. If Heaven should resume thee,
To Heaven shall her spirit ascend;

II. If Hell should entomb thee,
To Hell shall her high hearts bend.

I. If Annihilation —
II. Dust let her glories be;
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee!

And still, in talking of the incentive to imagination and to the social passion which Shelley found in Greece, we have only skirted the outer regions of his devotion. At his heart lay a deep and controlling discipleship to the power which had set him free in early youth, and continued to the end to exalt and satisfy his spirit. Shelley's mind was exactly of the type to assimilate most eagerly the Platonic metaphysic. It would be a fascinating quest to follow the influence of Platonism in our English poets. I think there is only one other poet — him of 'The Faëry Queen' — in whom it is so strong a spiritual force as in Shelley. And even Spenser has so Christianised his idealism that it is not so near Plato as is the purely natural mysticism of the poet of 'Adonais.' Thoroughly to discuss Shelley's Platonism — that is, his whole idealist philosophy, which is pervaded by Plato — would be outside the scope of this paper. I can only ask you to remember the constancy of his Platonic studies, and then to glance with me at that beautiful translation of the 'Symposium' in which, as it seems to me, Shelley has given a great treasure to our English prose. I think you will be surprised to see how many of Shelley's root-ideas are found even in this one dialogue, and how absolutely his distinctive thought coincides with that of his master.

The 'Symposium' is of course a dialogue about Love; and the conception of love, approached from one point of view after another in the Socratic fashion, is finally unfolded in full beauty by Socrates himself. Even in the earlier and inferior speeches, we find many ideas sympathetic to Shelley. The very first, bringing out the power of love as the one incentive to noble life and deed, finds echo in his whole work: the second speaker, Pausanias, emphasises that distinction between earthly and heavenly love, which is never far from Shelley's mind, and is expressed with special stress in the 'Athanase' and the 'Epipsychidion.' But it is when Socrates begins that we

feel ourselves definitely in the presence of Shelley's master. First, the old sage laughs gently at some of the preceding ideas, the pretty sentimental notions of the young poet, who thinks of Love as a fair god and gracious, dwelling in the place of flowers and fragrance, Lord of Joy and Glory of gods and men. He sets aside without comment the crude or rollicking materialism of the doctor or the comic poet. He goes on to give his own idea, in one of those delicate and marvellous Platonic myths which show the great philosopher equally great as a poet. Love, says Socrates, is not the offspring of Aphrodite; he is the Child of Poverty and Plenty, and has in him something of the nature of both parents. He interprets between gods and men, being neither mortal nor immortal. Hence he ever seeks and never finds, he is squalid, mean, terrible, imploring, he wanders through life the Companion of Want, and the same fate rests on those who join his fellowship. Now in this myth it seems to me we have the whole temper and spirit of Shelley, the whole philosophy of his wistful life. Not to possession, but to yearning, is his song attuned: —

> The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The longing for something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

Love's pilgrim, Companion of Want, his brief years were dedicated to a quest for ever baffled, ever renewed, — "the desire of generation in the Beautiful."

Love, Socrates goes on to say, must never be confined to one object. Shelley would quite agree with him: —

> True love in this differs from gold or clay
> That to divide is not to take away,

he cries in the 'Epipsychidion.' His conception, like Plato's, is sometimes baffling in its impersonality. But the impersonality of the Platonic idea has a noble source. Love can rest in no one object because it seeks the Arche-

typal Loveliness, the One Spiritual Substance, free from material taint. In the last part of the 'Symposium' Plato soars from the lesser to the greater mysteries, and reaches a vision never transcended. Few spirits could feel at home in this high region, but of these spirits Shelley is one. On the wide ocean of intellectual beauty — to quote his own echo of Plato — his little bark set sail. Plato's conception is indeed profoundly progressive and intellectual. From frequenting fair forms in youth, the soul is to mount to fair practices; thence to the vision of laws, of science, of One Science, supreme and eternal. Love is the quest of the Immortal; and its final aim is Truth.

An enemy might claim that Shelley never quite rose from the region of fair forms into the region of unembodied realities, or at least that he never long sustained himself in the upper air. The frail spirit even of a Shelley craves indeed the air of earth. Yet in the main he was true to his quest. On his eager boyhood fell the Shadow of Intellectual Beauty; he clasped his hands in ecstasy and swore that to the Power of the Unseen Ideal he would dedicate his life. "Have I not kept the vow?" he could proudly cry in later years. To Shelley as to Plato all earthly substance is reflection only, and the Ideal itself, as apprehended by the human mind, a "shadow of beauty unbeheld."

> For love and beauty and delight
> There is no death nor change; their might
> Exceeds our organs, which endure
> No light, being themselves obscure.

Shelley's Platonism is deep as his thought, deep as his faith. It blends with his very life.

Thus Greece became to Shelley far more than a country. She became a great Fact, a great Idea, aglow with life. She comprehended the best he could conceive of creative beauty, of high social passion, of intellectual and spiritual wisdom. And so he proclaimed her immortality: —

> Greece and her foundations are
> Built below the tide of war,
> Based on the crystalline sea
> Of thought, and its eternity.

A third of a century flies past us; we are in the Victorian age; a new poetic generation is murmuring in our ears. What message has Greece for our Victorians? Her work for Shelley was clear. The Greek spirit was "the eagle fed with morning" which swept this young Ganymede up from the prosaic levels of eighteenth century thought to a seat with the Immortals. Such triumphs she is to know in our century no more. Her power is to move in a medium either alien or impotent. The fact is all the more striking because the desire of the poets is largely the other way. Classical models are more conscientiously studied; the classical ethics and philosophy are more zealously followed; there is a strained deliberate effort to return to Hellenic standards in art, thought, and faith. But where is the Hellenic spirit? Our neopaganism is no longer instinctive but defiant, no longer natural but assumed. Shelley writes a classic drama while he is trying to do something quite different. Swinburne and Arnold with splendid equipment try their best to write one, produce a perfect imitation in form, — and fail. The failures are beautiful to be sure, but their beauty is an insult to real classicism. They are written on theory, not impulse. Swinburne says to himself: The Greek drama is fatalist; go to! I will be more fatalist still. So he heaps tragic motive on motive — four deep in the 'Atalanta in Calydon' — adorns the whole with supreme melody — and produces a drama from which any Greek would recoil in bewildered dismay. He offends by the Too Much. Arnold, on the other hand, says to himself: The note of the Greek moral temper is moderation; I will be more moderate. And he writes the 'Merope,' whereof the end is tameness. He offends by the Too Little. Both

these true poets wish to be Greek, try to be Greek — both with Leconte de Lisle, Carducci, and others are children of the latest neo-pagan reaction. But how futile, how pitiful their attempts — though interesting always, even at times felicitous in a studied way — beside the heroic ease and buoyancy and free joyousness of Shelley's classical work!

An entirely different relation to classical ideals is shown in Browning. No attempt in him to return to antiquity, casting off from his feet the dust of the present! He exults in that modern life which our minor and weaker Victorian poets with one accord deplore. A man of our own time, his genial and large presence seems still among us, proclaiming harmony in our jangles and discords. Nobody, I suppose, could be more un-Greek than Browning, by nature. He is modern, Christian, Gothic, Teutonic, what you will — but Greek — never! In Italy, where Shelley has eyes for nothing artistic except Greek statues, Browning sees first and foremost mediæval Christian art. We all remember his deliberate, spirited vindication of his preferences in 'Old Pictures in Florence' — his repudiation, once and for ever, of the Pagan ideal. How terse, how final, it is! Put it beside passages from Shelley's Letters, if you would see the difference of spirit: —

> May I take upon me to instruct you?
> When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
> Thus much had the world to boast, *in fructu* —
> The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
> Which the actual generations garble,
> Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
> And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.
>
> So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
> As you might have been, as you cannot be;
> Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
> And grew content in your poor degree
> With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
> And your little scope, by those eyes' full sway,
> And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
> And your little date, by their forms that stay.
> . . . . . .

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start — What if we so small
Are greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For Time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us, and more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

It will be interesting to see what a poet of this defiantly modern attitude will make of Greek subjects. Despite his alleged indifference, he cannot let them alone. Through the long sequence of his work, beginning in boyhood, there are allusions, suggestions, there are notable occasional poems. Finally, in later life, his delightful imaginative curiosity, satiated with roaming through his own times and the Renascence, turns back to that wide world of antiquity, explores it a little, and presents us on its return with 'Balaustion's Adventure,' 'Aristophanes' Apology,' and the translation of the 'Agamemnon.'

We notice at once that Browning pays no attention whatever to those elements in the Hellenic ideal which swayed and shaped Shelley's genius: its mythopœic impulse, its conception of beauty, its passion for freedom, its philosophic thought. Myth-making? Browning has something better to do; he creates not myths, but men. Ideas of beauty? No statue-reminiscences for the poet whose souls, stripped bare almost of fleshly vesture, are permitted to pause one instant only in their bewildering flight through eternity, to reveal their past and their future. Of outward beauty, indeed, Browning takes curi-

ously little account — less perhaps than any other great poet except Shakespeare. He suggests it, but as for being dizzy in its presence, like Shelley, the only presence in which Browning's sturdy genius becomes rapt is that of a moral victory. So, —

> bring the invisible full into play!
> Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?

There 's his idea — What then of the Greek passion for freedom, the incentive to noble social and political ideals to be found in the great annals of antiquity? How about Greece, the Mother of the Free? Why, of course Browning admits all that, as any school-boy does, and gives it lip-homage. But real vital personal enthusiasm over the abstract idea of Greece, I cannot find. Our great poet was not much stirred, so far as I can discover, by the Destiny of Nations; he was too passionately absorbed in the destiny of souls. The wide social and political conceptions of the Revolution, Browning, after 'Sordello,' simply passes by, except when he uses the passion for liberty, or patriotism — usually the latter — as a motive for such a character-study as Luigi or Djabal. I said at the outset, and truly, that he is a great prophet of Freedom. But the truth is that Freedom, which to the poets of the Revolution, as to the Greeks, was a political collective aim, quite consistent, at least in Shelley, with a fatalistic philosophy concerning the individual, is to Browning profoundly personal and inward, a spiritual, not a social state. Sometime, I hope a poet will come to show us that it must be both to be either, but we have not found him yet.

Finally, as to Platonism. I speak with diffidence, but it does not seem to me that Browning was a Platonist, except as every civilised man, especially every idealist, must be one. Certainly, the points in Plato's thought on which we have just seen Shelley seizing most eagerly, have no attraction for Browning. Shelley, following Plato, thinks

of each human love as imperfect shadow of the Archetype, to be discarded as the soul goes on. Browning's plea for fickleness — he has one, *vide* 'Fifine' — rests on quite a different basis. With the emotional communism of Shelley and Plato he has no sympathy at all. He is as personal in his thought of love as he is everywhere. To him, each beloved individual — Constance, Colombe, Caponsacchi — is a substantial, final, concrete *fact* — not a *shadow* of Eternal Beauty, but a part of it. People are not shadows to Browning, even of the infinite; they are more, — they are men and women. In the Platonic picture of Love hovering between Poverty and Plenty, we come nearer to the thought of the man who, truly as Shelley, is the prophet of aspiration; yet here too the likeness is, I think, chiefly apparent. To Plato and Shelley, a passion while it exists is ultimate and absolute; advance comes through discarding it for a new and higher love. But to Browning at his best, growth is innate within each noble love. A great passion, like the life-giving air of spring, supplies an atmosphere within which the nature expands to its perfection. Not only through desire but through possession, the great law of development goes on.

Browning is at no point touched to sympathy with Shelley on classic themes. Neither his æsthetic nor his political nor his philosophic self is influenced, far less pervaded, by Greek thought. And now, is it not a tribute to the inexhaustibleness of classic civilisation that this man, this alien, should dip into its great store-house — turning away from the treasures of the Christian World — and bring forth things entirely new, genuinely Greek, which Shelley would never have had either eyes to see or heart to love? This is what Browning has done. His treatment of Greece has been so fruitful, so illuminating, that many of us get from it entirely new ideas of much in that great Greek world. Let us not talk in negatives any longer; let us ask what our poet has to tell us about Greece.

I cannot find that Browning in early life plunged very eagerly into Greek literature. Incorrigible modern that he was, Shelley seems to have done for him very much what the Greeks did for Shelley. His father, who was a scholar and read Greek, told him the 'Tale of Troy' and rocked him to sleep with 'Anacreon' when he was a baby; but it is doubtful if the 'Anacreon' was appreciated. He must, however, have been familiar with a good many classic masterpieces before writing 'Pauline.' The classic allusions in that poem are so interesting that I quote them. Browning has not at all found himself in this first poem of his. It is, of course, written under the controlling influence of Shelley, and the classical bits seem to me viewed through Shelley's mind, and treated in Shelley's manner. He is describing his early reading: —

> They came to me in my first dawn of life
> Which passed alone with wisest ancient books
> All halo-girt with fancies of my own;
> And I myself went with the tale — a god
> Wandering after beauty, or a giant
> Standing vast in the sunset — an old hunter
> Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
> Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.
> I tell you, naught has ever been so clear
> As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives:
> I had not seen a work of lofty art,
> Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,
> Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
> On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
> The deep groves and white temples and wet caves;
> And nothing ever will surprise me now —
> Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
> Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

And these vivid lines on the great tragedies, two of which he afterwards translated: —

> The lore
> Loved for itself and all it shows — the king
> Treading the purple calmly to his death,
> While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,

The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom;
And him sitting alone in blood, while friends
Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls
Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard
To tell his story ere his reason goes.

Again: —

Andromeda!
And she is with me: years roll, I shall change,
But change can touch her not — so beautiful
With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,
And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,
Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking
At her feet; quite naked and alone; a thing
I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
To save will come in thunder from the stars.

Those are very lovely passages; and the dwelling on the ideal beauty and the mythology of Greece seems to me quite in Shelley's manner. At the same time, I like to note how Browning peeps out, in the choice of unusual epithet like "salt-sweeping," and above all in the dramatic instinct, the note of personal interest, as in the three vivid lines of the Orestes' story. He never did just this sort of thing again. After 'Pauline,' Greece practically vanished from his early work. In 'Sordello' and 'Paracelsus' he turned to study far more congenial periods, — the Middle Ages, and the revival of learning. In 'Pippa Passes,' where Browning's genius seems to me to burn clear for the first time, there is a fine description of a bas-relief, and Jules, the young sculptor, is an ardent devotee of classic art; a few exquisite touches describe the pure and alas! deceptive beauty of Phene, the Greek bride. But Jules deserts his classical ideas at the end, and "breaks his paltry models up, to begin Art afresh." A Shelley hero would not have done that. I remember no classic work in

the other dramas. Then comes the long central period of Browning's genius, — the 'Men and Women' and 'Dramatis Personæ,' — a period of poems short, but, as many still feel, his greatest. In the range of these brilliant poems, which almost run the gamut of possible experience in every age, it would be strange indeed if we found no classic studies. But the hour of Greece has not yet struck for Browning. Such studies are very few; these few, however, brilliant and noteworthy. The first is 'Artemis Prologises,' a fragment of a tragedy dealing with the Phædra-Hippolutos story, composed, Browning tells us, much against his will while he lay ill in bed with a fever. Artemis, standing beside Asclepios in the forest while he seeks to resuscitate the dead youth, tells in terse, pure, direct lines the tale of his tragic death: —

> I am a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
> And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed
> By none whose temples whiten this the world.
> Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along;
> I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
> On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
> Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
> And every feathered mother's callow brood,
> And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
> Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
> Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
> Upon my image at Athenai here;
> And this dead youth, Asclepios bends above,
> Was dearest to me.

She then tells the story in a way very still, sustained, intense, and, as it seems to me, eminently classic. There is great rapidity and spirited conciseness of style in the lines describing the overthrow of the chariot by the sea-beast, and the dragging of Hippolutos along the shore:

> then fell the steeds,
> Head-foremost, crashing in their moonèd fronts,
> Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
> His people, who had witnessed all afar,
> Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos,

But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary, and, deed
By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.

. . . . . .

Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

This noble poem certainly avoids the criticism pronounced by Matthew Arnold in his letters, anent Swinburne's 'Atalanta,' — that the moderns will only tolerate the antique on condition of having it more beautiful, according to their ideas, than the antique itself. There is no touch of ornament here, only the severe story; the beauty, true to Greek fashion, is in subject and situation: the virgin-goddess beside the aged Healer, bending over the virgin-youth; no sentimentalising permitted in treatment. One can well imagine that these cool verses brought refreshment to a fevered brain. I suppose it was with intention that Browning, when he re-arranged his works, placed this poem immediately before 'The Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, an Arab Physician,' the Pagan legend of resurrection, with its serene physical character, quite devoid of spiritual suggestion, before his wonderful meditation on the Christian Story of Lazarus. He was fond of such juxtapositions.

'Cleon' is the next classic study which we find. The poem, very brilliant, is, if I mistake not, of especial significance; for in it Browning first shows his peculiar attitude toward antiquity, — an attitude which I think he is alone in holding among our modern poets, — that of the critic. 'Cleon' is a study of the mind of a cultured Greek of the decadence, when Greek civilisation has run its course and told its whole story, — a characteristic moment for Brown-

ing to choose. It opens with four lines that set before us the outer scene, and certain vivid hints of the manners of the time, their courtesy, and their respect for the arts: —

> Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
> Lily on lily, that o'er-lace the sea,
> And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece") —
> To Protus in his tyranny, much health!

Vivid though the setting is, Browning cares little for it. He writes out of no enthusiasm for Greece, but out of keen desire to penetrate her intellectual secrets, and to show the inadequacy of her conception of life. He wishes to analyse the "profound discouragement" into which, according to his idea, her children fall, as in old age they realise the futility of seeking to comprehend all the truth and beauty their clear spirit sees, within finite limits of personality or time. Cleon, the poet, artist, philosopher, the versatile and cultured man, touching all arts, achieving highest excellence in none, calls upon One who shall manifest all human possibilities in one supreme perfection. Cleon, the elderly man, his every power just brought by long study to the point of critical fineness where life could truly be enjoyed, cries out in despair, menaced by the Final Darkness. The dramatic point of the poem is found in the two passages, full of strange pathos, where Cleon unconsciously shows the two great Christian truths necessary to make his Pagan life worth living: —

> Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
> That [Zeus], or other God, descended here,
> And, once for all, showed simultaneously
> What, in its nature, never can be shown,
> Piecemeal or in succession; — showed, I say,
> The worth both absolute and relative
> Of all his children from the birth of time.

and

> It is so horrible,
> I dare at times imagine to my need
> Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
> Unlimited in capability

> For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
> . . . But no!
> Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
> He must have done so — were it possible!

Thus the old Pagan civilisation, according to Browning, reduces itself *ad absurdum*, and Cleon, its mouthpiece and representative, declares: —

> Where is the sign? I ask,
> And get no answer, and agree in sum,
> O king, with thy profound discouragement,
> Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
> Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

There 's a splendid dramatic turn at the end. Cleon, in his desperate sense of need, has cried: —

> Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas
> He must have done so — were it possible!

He turns, with the courteous scorn which only the man of culture can show, to answer one last question of his correspondent: —

> Live long and happy, and in that thought die;
> Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
> I cannot tell thy messenger aright
> Where to deliver what he bears of thine
> To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
> Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —
> I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
> Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
> As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
> Hath access to a secret shut from us?
> Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
> In stooping to inquire of such an one,
> As if his answer could impose at all!
> He writeth, doth he? Well, and he may write.
> Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
> Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
> And (as I gathered from a bystander)
> Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

Thus confronting dying Greece with new-born Christianity, Browning turns away. We are left to imagine how the reply of Paul to Protus would differ from that of Cleon.

I have dwelt on this poem because of its significance, and also because it is, for a long time, Browning's last classical study. He had said his say, — a short one, — pronounced his judgment, and passed on. The poem was written in 1855. Not till 1871 did he give the world his next poem on a Greek subject, 'Balaustion's Adventure.' In the mean time he had published 'Dramatis Personæ' and 'The Ring and the Book.' His married life had closed. His message had been given. Through all Christianised civilisation his spirit had roamed, interpreting with rare passion and power the intensely varied possibilities of human experience. In 'The Ring and the Book,' in particular, he had made close study of Christian society at its most corrupt period. The monologue of the Pope, in a brilliant passage which might well be put beside Cleon, compares the results of Christian civilisation with those which might be pleaded by Euripides. This passage, if I mistake not, is the first indication of Browning's devotion to Euripides. All this strong, varied, and fiery work — the work of his prime — Browning had produced. Then suddenly he turned aside — from what impulse who shall say? Perhaps from simple wish for new manifestations of human life to explore; perhaps from a little weariness with over-complex Christianised conditions, a little craving for the freshness and savour of an elder world. Only three years separate Pompilia from Balaustion. Slighted Greece claimed her own, as she claims it from each master-spirit. Nor would she leave him till her claim was granted, and her annals enriched by 'Balaustion's Adventure,' 'Aristophanes' Apology,' — the transcripts from Euripides, and the translation of the 'Agamemnon.' The decade between 1871 and 1880 includes all Browning's longer classic poems, and witnesses the fervour with which he threw his great intellect at its prime back upon Hellenic antiquity.

The two short Greek poems of this period — 'Pheidip-

pides' and 'Echetlos' — have a different, more purely artistic interest. They give Browning's splendid and mature power in classical experiment. The poem 'Pheidippides,' in particular, should be put beside the early passages in 'Pauline,' to show how the old dream-mist has faded away, and the images stand out clean-cut, masterly, seen through pure, autumnal air. *Chairete, Nikomen* — the words ring through our ears. Here we have Browning on Shelley's own ground. Here, for once, is the delighted rendering of a Greek myth, here the statuesque conception of athletic prowess, here the splendid passion for Greece and freedom. But we wear our rue with a difference. The beautiful statue is poised on no relief; he races in long steady stress between Athens and Sparta, a real youth, whose panting breath keeps time to our own across the centuries. The god, too, is no bright emanation of air and intellect, like Shelley's Olympians; he is a splendid, grotesque, shaggy creature, over whose kindly countenance spreads the "good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth."

> There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestical Pan!
> Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof.
> All the great God was good, in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl
> Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
> As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.

The passion for freedom is no longer lyrical and abstract; it is embodied in history, enhanced by the background of contention between Athens and Sparta, and carried onward into the very field of Marathon. Character and fact have replaced abstraction and fantasy.

In the greater poems, which the Browning Society has this year so carefully considered, Browning's distinctive method of treating classic subjects reaches full development. And how unique it is! Regardless of Greek myths or Greek ideals, he makes straight for Greek life: —

> Lo, the past is hurled
> In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
> Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
> Its outline, kindles at the core, appears —

not Verona this time, but Athens. His imagination works directly on the complex social and artistic conditions of that ancient city. I do not know any man of vision who has given so brilliant a delineation of Greek society as Browning. I know none who has attempted it except Walter Savage Landor, and I wish some enterprising member of our Society would set his 'Pericles and Aspasia' against 'Balaustion' and 'Aristophanes.' Perhaps these poems, with their easy wealth of illustration and their wide intellectual interest, could hardly have been written before the epoch of modern scholarship. The imagination plays in them on the results of close classical study. As we owe the Hellenic poems of Shelley to an æsthetic and philosophical inspiration, derived from classic literature, so in Browning the historic sense comes into play, nourished on the records of Hellenic life.

The first thing to strike us as we read these brilliant poems, is that Browning is in his own way as great an enthusiast for Greece as Shelley himself, or Swinburne, or Chénier. No imaginative writer has proved himself more splendidly appreciative of what we consider the classic ideal of beauty, with its bright dignity. The beauty centres of course in Balaustion, one of his loveliest creations. Pure Greek assuredly she is; single-hearted, ardent, unconscious, gracious, yet with all her high simplicity keen of wits and swift in scorn. She is set apart from Browning's modern women by her pure directness of passion and intent. What could be fairer setting to her first Adventure than the sight of her, surrounded by her four listening friends — Petalé, Phullis, Charopé, Chrusion, clustering around her,

> with each red-ripe mouth
> Crumpled so close, no quickest breath it fetched
> Could disengage the lip-flower furled to bud.

What classical idealist could fail to be satisfied with the picture of Balaustion, springing on the ship's altar and swaying and singing there, while to the music of her high song the rowers drive the pursued ship fiercely forward through the black sea? As she stands in her impassioned purity on the steps of the Temple of Herakles, pressed by the eager Syracusans breathless for the Alkestis-tale, while Euthukles sits reverent at her feet, our thought goes back to the Cythna of Shelley, chanting the pæan of freedom by the Altar of the Federation. The beauty is the same; but warm human interest, and emotions historically possible, have replaced Shelley's bright dream.

The Greece of Shelley lives in the heart of Balaustion; but how much more besides! Through the lips of this "lyric girl," rather than through a disquisition, Browning elects to tell us of the prime and decadence of the arts in Greece. Incidentally, many of the chief features of Greek intellectual life come out — always against the suggested background of political turmoil. The picture is vividly alive, and, at least in the first poem, inspiriting. The wholesome vigour of a civilisation where the arts were the heritage of all, natural as air to the entire populace, instead of being, as too often to-day, the monopoly of a languid æsthetic aristocracy, never has been better rendered. There is a delightful simplicity and sanity about the whole thing. True to fact, and to his own constant impulse, Browning gives us no cloudy vision of glory and freedom, but a society in flux of life, where fermenting forces are at work, moving, alas! to deterioration. Two stages of a great civilisation are imaged in these poems.

It is characteristic of our Victorian poet that he does not choose for his study the Age of Pericles. That splendid Thirty Years — it was no more — still to the instinct of the world as to the instinct of Shelley means the whole concept "Greece." Browning's first poem gives us Greece yet aglow with more than the memory of the great age.

Sophokles and Euripides still uphold the high tradition of Art and Freedom; yet already Nikias is defeated, and the islands rise against the dominion of Athens. Factions are virulent, though, "because Greeks are Greeks, and hearts are hearts, and poetry is power," Balaustion is able for one brief splendid hour to lift men into high loyalty to art and Hellas. 'Aristophanes' is placed some years later. The disaster has come. Balaustion once more speeds across the Ægean, humiliated, scornful. Sparta has triumphed; the walls of Athens are laid low. Looking back, the Lady with her warm golden eyes reviews for us the conditions which led to the great downfall. "The poetry and prose of a life" Browning always loved to show us in successive acts. Balaustion's first Adventure is the poetry of Greece; her second, its prose. Aristophanes succeeds Euripides; surrounded by his rollicking chorus of scoffers, he bursts into Balaustion's presence. Before her grave Greek purity, — how effective the picture! — the ribald crowd slinks abashed away: —

> Witness whom you scare,
> Superb Balaustion,

chuckles the comic poet, with swift dramatic sense. Dismissing these attendants, the great and grotesque Master makes his Apology to Balaustion and to us; reveals with keenest satire the weak side of that brilliant society, its foibles which he flattered, its scandal which he fostered, its impatience of high aims in politics or art. Greece is still Greece, and Aristophanes, subtle, slippery, scintillating, has the old intellectual brilliance. But subtlety in him has gone too far, and his shifting sophistry, his casuistical excuses for loose speech and life, the side-lights thrown on the fickleness and irreverence of the Athenian populace, show better than pages of historical disquisition how that bright Pagan life moved to disaster. It is the Athens of the decadence which he gives us, in brief vignette of theatre, street, or banquet, — a city crossed now

and then by the grave pale shadow of Sophokles, or hushed into brief respect by the message of the death of its third great tragedian, only to break forth into fiercer carousing. This Greece — imaged in environment by Aristophanes' talk, in essence by his personality — this Greece was bound to fall. Close to history, close to the inexorable truths of the moral law, Browning has given us an entirely new revivification of classic fact.

Close to history — but are we sure of the statement? Plenty of readers are found to deny the claim a bit scornfully; to assert that 'Aristophanes' Apology' is no more really Greek than 'Ferishtah's Fancies' is Persian, — that both are a convenient garb for English Browning. Probably the style is chiefly responsible for this impression. Our neo-pagan imitations as a rule, from Shelley to Arnold and Swinburne, are limpid, simple, and pure, — smooth reading, in which tongue and thought slip easily along, assured that no incorrectness or obscurity will break the even tenor of dignity. Browning's style can be dignified and even with the best; yet how often it brings up the hapless reader with a jolt, sets him to hair-splitting subtleties, maddens a slow brain by elisions, contractions, and hints, and a pleasure-loving one by harsh concatenation of consonants! Very modern, doubtless; and yet — I speak timidly, lest student-recollections play me false — is there not another aspect to Greek style besides serenity and lucidity? Did not that amazing people write at times with a lofty abruptness which clashes harshly upon ear and mind, with swift, bewildering condensation, with sudden turns and subtle hints enough to require volumes of footnotes from a languid generation? If I am wrong, certain hours spent over tragic choruses, and over pages of Thucydides — I beg Browning's pardon, Thoukudides — were strangely misleading. Plenty of poets are eager to imitate the clearness and self-restraint and harmony of Greek style; I know none except Browning who has

seized on its difficulty, its intense almost rude conciseness, thought-freighted, thought-divided. These are the qualities which make his rugged translation of the 'Agamemnon' so imposing to me: —

> The tenth year this, since Priamos' great match,
> King Menelaos, Agamemnon king,
> — The strenuous yoke-pair of the Atreidai's honour —
> Two-throned, two-sceptred, whereof Zeus was donor,
> Did from this land the aid, the armament despatch,
> The thousand-sailored force of Argives clamouring
> "Ares" from out the indignant breast.

I think that much more sincere work than: —

> This year is the tenth since to plead their right
> 'Gainst Priam with arms in the court of fight
> Two monarchs of throned and sceptred reign
> Vicegerents of Zeus, the Atridæ twain,
> Led from this coast their warlike host,
> With a thousand vessels to cross the main,
> From their soul fierce battle crying.

It may of course be urged that much roughness and obscurity in the narrative portions of Greek tragedy are due to corruption of the text, and that a translator should not follow this accidental effect. Yet when all is said, Browning's 'Agamemnon' bears much the same relation to our ordinary classic transcripts that the majestic shattered remains of the Temple of Poseidon at Pæstum bear to modern Greek architecture, such for instance as our Bostonian St. Paul's on Tremont Street.

The question of accuracy is yet more subtle and unanswerable when we turn to the delineation of Greek life. We can never, of course, reach any surety in such a question, since no living mortal can escape the modern personal equation in judgment. Browning is certainly no belated Greek, and the spirit of Hellas never leaps in his veins. He is a Christian constraining himself to enter an alien world. His sub-conscious appeal to the modern audience is never absent; in a word, he is not the

countryman but the critic of his creations. But the critic to-day no longer looks at his subject from afar, or touches it with cool, distant finger. He darts to the centre of his subject and speaks thence; he has become the interpreter. So Browning, in these poems, projects the light of his whole rare intelligence and imagination upon Greek society, and he would be a pedant indeed who found the result without value. Specific inconsistencies and inaccuracies of detail might indeed be discovered. Would a high-minded woman of that period, we may ask, be able to play the public part of Balaustion? More serious, in a way, are the points where the modern man drops his ancient mask, and Browning resorts to his favourite device and puts into the mouth of his characters unconscious prophecy. One detail of this kind is the constant reaching forward through the æsthetic discussion to the poet who shall combine comedy and tragedy, the Shakespeare who is to be. I am never sure how far this trick of Browning's is legitimate, but it is always interesting. In these poems, however, it is of infrequent occurrence. Despite slips in fact and spirit, I do not see how any one can read the poems without feeling that the poet of Christianity and the Renascence has for the time being retreated in a really masterly way within the spiritual and intellectual horizon open before the time of Christ. If proof of Browning's imaginative scholarship were needed, a mere comparison of the range of thought and feeling in Christian Pompilia and Greek Balaustion will be convincing witness.

Greece was only an episode to Browning. Once more, in the 'Parleyings with Gerard de Lairesse,' he returned to delightful brooding, something after the 'Pauline' manner, over fair classic myths, only to end with deliberate plea for the modern and the real. His pilgrim mind pressed out into our present world where paradoxes thicken, the world of Napoleon III. and Léonce Miranda. His powers played with the old freedom again on Chris-

tian thought in 'Ferishtah's Fancies,' on personal revelations in 'Asolando.' Only one short episode in a varied intellectual career. But what an episode! Browning the alien gives us in this handful of poems more of real Greece, the Greece of history, than has Shelley or Swinburne or any neo-pagan by instinct and by choice. To Shelley, Athens is

> a city such as vision
> Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
> Of battlemented cloud.

To Browning, it is the home of men and women, whose eager interests we may share, and whose warm friendship may be ours. His way and Shelley's are both good: good to respond with the idealist to the Vision of wisdom, beauty, freedom — good also, with the psychologist and dramatist, to feel the strong strange fellowship of human life, spanning centuries and civilisations. Greece, the "Mother of the Free!" She has shaped and controlled the spirit of the poet who chiefly among moderns sings the liberty of the race; and she has, if not shaped, yet enriched and diversified the power of the poet who, chief among moderns, has revealed the liberty of the soul. She is unexhausted yet, who can tell what new inspiration she may hold, what new spiritual affinities she may awaken, in the poet of the future? The calm correctness of Addison, the revolt of Shelley and Swinburne, the weary resignation of Arnold, the realistic subtlety of Browning, all hark back to Greece, all present themselves in her name and with her sanction. Assuredly, those yet to come will bring new treasures to the race still in that sacred name.

THE NATURE ELEMENT IN BROWNING'S POETRY.

By EMMA ENDICOTT MAREAN.

[Read before the Boston Browning Society, March 23, 1897.]

NATURE has always exercised a compelling influence over the mind of man. The glory of the heavens, the solemnity of the forest shades, the hush of early dawn, and the mystery of the ever-changing ocean, touched him ages ago with irresistible attraction. The early mythologies are a proof of their power to subdue, to uplift, and to renew. The hymn of the Aryan worshipper at daybreak, the chant of the American Indian, the handkiss of the Persian, have all had back of them that instinctive reverence of the soul in the presence of an eternal witness to some power greater than itself.

Yet there have been changes in the spirit with which man has approached nature, none the less real because they are in some respects hard to define. Speaking briefly, one may say that the characteristic of the nature element in Greek literature is form rather than suggestion, and that the word of nature to man was embodied in definite legend rather than in the expression of conscious sympathy or suggestion. The love of nature for its own sake was practically unrecognised even where it may be detected, and it is difficult for us to appreciate the delicacy and ingenuousness of that emotion which created the myths, and repeated them again and again. This Greek feeling for nature allures while it baffles us. Our poets

sigh backward for the old-world unconsciousness and wish that they

> had been born in nature's day,
> When man was in the world a wide-eyed boy.

The new glow of life and exuberance of feeling that flooded the world with the advent of the Elizabethans was expressed in their interpretations of nature hardly less than in the swing and spirit with which they set forth dramatic action, or revealed with masterly strokes the many-sidedness of human nature. The breath of outdoor life was genuine, and betrayed no hint of the study or of the stage. Its sincerity was made evident by simple touches of incidental description, too fine and accurate not to have been the outcome of experience; secondly, there was in it the glow and richness of imagination, equal to creating a new world of light and colour; and, finally, nature appeared, not as a background, or with definite, fixed significance, as in the days of the Greeks, but with a bewildering variety of suggestion that illustrated human nature, and might be compared with it. The imagination that could interpret the world of human life by the objective universe, the exquisite comparisons that wove the two together, might almost have seemed to leave nothing over for later poets to express; but with the coming of the nineteenth century, two entirely new elements entered into the poetry of nature, influencing new periods of poetic vitality.

The first of these two elements came in the reaction against all traditional or conventional authority which dominated the thinkers and the poets of the opening century. The causes that led to the French Revolution, the clash of opinions, and the conflict of ideals which accompanied it, influenced deeply the thoughts of men in England, and the new tendency showed itself, not only in the enthusiasm for freedom in political and social directions, but in a desire to throw off the bonds of ecclesiastical and

theological restraint and to put in their place attractions and feelings deeper but far less definite. The wonderful poetry of the Elizabethans, born out of the fresh feeling and eager spirit of the age, must be compared with poetry, equally vital and genuine, equally the expression of intensified national ideals.

The glory of external nature thrilled the souls of the new poets through and through. In it they found revealed a diviner beauty and goodness than their creeds had taught, and they yielded themselves to a pantheistic adoration, whose spiritual passion thrills us yet. The love of nature was itself a religion. Through it they could look to the God of nature, here revealed as nowhere else. There is a rapture, a self-surrender, about the writings of their poets that is not repeated by their successors. Even Wordsworth, reflective as he is, addresses the skylark with

> There 's madness about thee, and joy divine
> In that song of thine;
> Lift me, guide me high and high
> To thy dwelling-place in the sky;

and he could listen to the wandering voice of the cuckoo until the earth seemed an unsubstantial, fairy place, and the bird itself rather "a hope, a voice," longed for but never seen, than a veritable creature of English woods and air. The intense, compelling emotion of Keats' 'Ode to the Nightingale' is hardly more than representative, and Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' is as ardent and heart-thrilling as any expression of religious devotion.

No one would claim that these poets were indifferent to the world of activity around them, unless one may except Keats; but their writings reveal a distinct tendency to exalt nature at the expense of man. Byron, whose rebellious individualism was balanced neither by the intellectual serenity of Wordsworth, nor by Shelley's boundless sympathy with suffering, aspiring humanity, nor by Keats'

passionate longing for harmony between the inward vision and the outward symbol, wrote —

> High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
> Of human cities torture; I can see
> Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
> A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
> Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee
> And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
> Of ocean and the stars, mingle and not in vain.

Even Wordsworth, with his unwavering insistence on duty, and the joys to be found in simple affections, wrote about "our meddling intellects," and supplies various illustrations of this tendency. All the poets witness to the fact that with this period a new element of worship entered into the poetry of nature, of which one must take account in order to understand the significance of their successors.

The second and later element which modified the characteristic of which I have just spoken, and, in some respects, absolutely reversed the attitude of poets and critics alike, has been, of course, science. Many a critic has deplored the results likely to appear from the introduction of this new element, with its inevitable tendencies toward realism and exactness of statement. It was Stedman who wrote in 1875, "The truth is, that our schoolgirls and spinsters wander down the lanes with Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer under their arms; or if they carry Tennyson, Longfellow, and Morris, read them in the light of spectrum analysis, or test them by the economics of Mill and Bain." Mr. George Willis Cooke wrote in 1886: "Theoretically, science should put no obstacles in the way of a poet, but, practically, it has acted as a check of the most serious kind;" and he felt that the results of the scientific impulse and method on poetry might be noted by depression and exhaustion. With all due respect to the familiar formula, "An age of science cannot be an age of song," one need simply say with Professor Norton and Miss Vida

Scudder, "Ah, but it has been," and call the roll of the poets, who but yesterday lived among us.

The true poets themselves have never feared the effect of science on their Muse, in spite of the declaration made in 1870, by the present poet laureate of England, that not even Shakespeare himself could have written poetry in an age of such intellectual discord as our own. It has been pointed out more than once that the poets have prefigured by their imagination what the scientists have afterwards formulated for us as fact. The fifth act of Browning's 'Paracelsus,' and the one hundred and seventeenth canto of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam,' appeared long before 'The Origin of Species;' yet both are as clear and as poetic statements of the evolution theory as could ever have been made of life on the basis of special creation, and Wordsworth's famous prophecy was fulfilled without a question. The entire drama of 'Paracelsus' is at once a welcome to the new scientific ideal, and a recognition of the truth that man cannot live by science alone. No matter how much we may learn, and however far back we may push the limits of knowledge, still our reach will for ever exceed our grasp, and the heaven of a complete life must include the development and satisfaction of many tendencies and longings.

The poets then were not unfriendly to the new divinity thus shaping their ends. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that new thoughts of evolution and unity should put a new significance into the entire universe, and it became necessary to readjust our thoughts of the relation in which man stands to the eternal forces working in and through it. The twin ideas of democracy and science have invested man in his every condition with a new interest. Nature poetry has been not outgrown, not in any sense outgrown, but correlated with wider thoughts of man and his development. Problems of the spirit engaged the poets as well as the thinkers. They wrestled with the

treacheries of doubt, the demands of the intellect, the new conceptions of social progress. In a time like this, nature became the refuge and the comfort, the restorer of the wearied soul. The sadness of the earlier nature poetry, which contrasted the change and decay of human life with the unconscious perfection of the exterior universe, yielded to the thought of life eternal in eternally changing form. The sphinx took on a merry mood and turned on man with the challenge, "Thou art the unanswered question."

Again, these poets, touched by the spirit of a scientific age, ceased to dream and began to observe. The observation has often been loving, sometimes even rapturous, but it has been observation, not absorption nor self-surrender. They have not resigned the poet's prerogative to press nature into the service of the heart, but they do this with a fidelity to truth that courts the test of analysis as well as the test of suggestion.

Although the Victorian poets have certain characteristics in common, distinguishing them from the poets of other periods, yet there are interesting and significant differences between their individual dependence on nature, no less distinctive than the differences between their poetic work taken as a whole. The artist among them is Tennyson. His lovely landscapes, suggestive of careful culture, lifelike as scenes one can remember, seem especially in his earlier work to ally most closely the art of painting and the art of poetry. Later nature is used more often to reflect the mood of the poem. Emerson is our priest, who sees in each fresh manifestation of nature the divinity behind it, who seeks ever for the absolute meaning, and whose eye reads omens where it goes. On him the world-soul presses close, and the stars tell secrets of being. Nevertheless, to him as to the other poets of his truth-seeking age, man is "the salt of all the elements, world of the world." The Parthenon, the pyramids, the English abbeys, are of equal date with Andes and with Ararat. He can

spare nothing out of his world, neither "water nor wine, tobacco-leaf nor poppy nor rose." Everything is akin to him, but he says "I will sift it all." For him the world was built in order and the atoms marched in tune. The pine-tree sang of the genesis of things, of eternal tendencies, of star-dust and of rounded worlds, but he yielded nothing of his own individuality. Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy" had no delusions for him, and he kept his cherub scorn for those whose botany consists in knowing Latin names, and who are

> strangers to the stars,
> And strangers to the mystic bird and beast,
> And strangers to the plant and to the mine.

When we come to the nature poetry of Browning, we find that with him nature is less a means of ornamentation than it is with Tennyson, less a source of personal enjoyment and universal revelation than it is with Emerson, less a refuge or anodyne for pain than it is with Arnold. It is subordinated to human nature to a degree not found in any other poet except Shakespeare, who uses it in much the same fashion. The development of a soul and incidents in that development have always the first, the supreme, the absorbing interest for Browning, and he frankly announces his position more than once, as in an interlude of 'Ferishtah's Fancies': —

> Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
> Under foot the moss-tracks, — life and love with these!
> I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
> All the long lone Summer-day, that greenwood life of ours!
> . . . . . .
> So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
> Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
> Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
> God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should souls have place.

In 'Fra Lippo Lippi' he puts it thus: —

> You 've seen the world
> — The beauty and the wonder and the power,
> The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,

> Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
> Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
> For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
> The mountain round it and the sky above,
> Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
> These are the frame to?

Then there is that other poem for which so many needlessly mystical explanations have been made, 'Wanting is — what?' To me it expresses that longing which sometimes takes possession of one in the loveliest and most soul-satisfying of solitary places, the longing for a companionship of enjoyment. Without the sense of human companionship the world remains a blank, "Framework which waits for a picture to frame."

Despite the witness of expressed statement and of the whole body of Browning's work to the truth that with him human life is the main interest, yet he was far from indifferent to nature or unobservant of its varying phases. If he belongs to the number of those whose songs, as John Chadwick puts it,

> have grown a part for me
> Of mountain splendour and of mobile sea

until

> Which are most God's, in sooth, I cannot tell,

it will become known rather by illustration than by argument.

In the first place, has Browning the power of presenting to the mind a vivid, life-like picture, complete in itself even if separated from the thought to which it may serve as background; that is, is he ever the artist pure and simple? Not often, it is true, if we keep in mind the whole body of his work; and contrary to what we might expect, and contrary to what is found true in the work of Tennyson, the most finished pictures must be sought in his later work. In 'Pauline,' that poem to which one naturally turns first for nature descriptions, he crowds together pictures indeed, but rarely one into which some

comparison with human experience is not introduced. For instance, the songs of the morning swallows sound to him like words; the sunshine comes again "like an old smile," the trees bend over the pool in the heart of the woods "like wild men o'er a sleeping girl." Again the

> ebbing day dies soft,
> As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,
> And in the heaven stars steal out one by one
> As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.

Once more

> Flower
> And tree can smile in light at the sinking sun
> Just as the storm comes, as a girl would look
> On a departing lover — most serene.

Then there is the lovely bit,

> Thou wilt remember one warm morn when winter
> Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
> Blew soft from the moist hills; the black-thorn boughs,
> So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
> In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
> Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks
> Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.

This reversal of the ordinary terms of comparison, all taken from this early poem, seems to me both interesting and significant. Let one more illustration, also from 'Pauline,' be added: —

> Autumn has come like spring returned to us,
> Won from her girlishness; like one returned
> A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
> The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
> Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers yet
> With the old smile, but yet so changed and still!

For pure description we must turn to later poems, in which there are two or three landscapes which indicate not only the careful observer but the artist whose eye sees effects in combination and reproduces their unity. For instance, there is the scene which greeted the younger

personage in 'The Inn Album,' when he opens his window in the morning, a scene which is alive with light and atmosphere: —

> He leans into a living glory-bath
> Of air and light where seems to float and move
> The wooded watered country, hill and dale
> And steel-bright thread of stream, a-smoke with mist,
> A-sparkle with May morning, diamond drift
> O' the sun-touched dew. Except the red-roofed patch
> Of half a dozen dwellings that, crept close
> For hill-side shelter, make the village clump,
> This inn is perched above to dominate —
> Except such sign of human neighbourhood,
> (And this surmised rather than sensible)
> There 's nothing to disturb absolute peace,
> The reign of English nature — which means art
> And civilised existence.

Still more definite in detail is the picture of the deep hollow in the woods,

> where combine
> Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade and cool
> The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
> Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.
> Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
> Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service tree
> And one beneficent rich barberry,
> Jewelled all over with fruit-pendents red.

As an example of Browning's success in catching the evanescent glory of some transition scene in nature, one may take that other passage, also from 'Gerard de Lairesse': —

> But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
> Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree
> Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
> And every strangled branch resumes its right
> To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs, waves free
> In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge,
> While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,
> Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,
> Each grass-blade's glory-glitter.

These seem to me to be examples of what Matthew Arnold would call the Greek way of treating nature. The Celtic magic enchants us rather in such lines as these, when the poet watches with Luigi the

> great stars
> That had a right to come first and see ebb
> The crimson wave that drifts the sun away;

or when he waits among the ruins for the girl with eager eyes and yellow hair,

> while thus the quiet-coloured eve
> Smiles to leave
> To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
> In such peace,
> And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
> Melt away;

or when, floating in the gondola, with the stars helping and the sea bearing part and the very night clinging closer to Venice' streets for the sake of that one sweet face, the lover sings in tones that the lotus-eaters might drowsily echo: —

> Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
> The land's lap or the water's breast?
> To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
> Or swim in lucid shallows just
> Eluding water-lily leaves?

Perhaps one understands best the strength and delicacy of Browning's nature-feeling when reading those short passages, which are struck off with swift, sure stroke, and distinguished rather by aptness of selection and fidelity of combination than by elaboration of detail. Such are the well-known lines of 'Meeting at Night,' or those in which he shows us the mountain from which the breastplate of a year's snows has just slipped at the spring's arrowy summons, or when he reminds us of the "warm, slow, yellow moon-lit nights," which stay in the soul long, long after they are gone; or in many lines that might be quoted

from 'Sordello' or 'The Flight of the Duchess,' or from the songs of 'Paracelsus.'

No one can doubt the personal enjoyment which Browning always found in outdoor life and in direct contact with nature. It is not often that he gives us a word of outspoken longing or delight such as we have in the 'Home Thoughts from Abroad,' with its note of pure joy in the blossoming pear-tree and the wise thrush, but there is the thrill of actual experience in the lines from 'Saul' which glorify the life of unrestrained physical activity. It speaks too from the more personal poem 'La Saisiaz.' He exults in the feat of honest mountain-climbing with its sense of achievement. Then comes the rare observation that notices how five days have scarcely served

> to entice, from out its den
> Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the cyclamen;
> Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the sloe-tree's gash,
> Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden ripe the mountain-ash.

Then beyond and above the beauty that fringes the pathway, the tangle-twine of leaf and bloom, the dusky gleam of the lake, the wrinkle of the blue water where the mazy Arve rushes into it, beyond and above all these is the true nature-lover's rapture of feeling awakened by the sight of Mont Blanc, "supreme above his earth-brood," with a glory that "strikes greatness small."

Nothing is unworthy Browning's observation. Often with a single word he fixes a flower or an insect so that thereafter it is named and known for us by his expression. The contumacious grasshopper, the fairy-cupped, elf-needled mat of moss, the red effrontery of the poppies, the mimic sun of Rudel's flower, what more is needed to characterise? Then how he revels in colour, painting in verse the red fans of the butterfly that scorch the rock on which it rests "like a drop of fire from a brandished torch;" or the wild tulip that "blows out its great red bell, like a thin clear bubble of blood;" or the summit of Salève, that,

thrilled and magnific, burns from black to gold; or the city of Madrid, "all fire and shine;" or the peach-blossom marble of the tomb at St. Praxed's, rare and ripe "as fresh-poured red wine;" or "that other kind of water, green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun." The glory moments of dawn and sunset attract him with compelling charm; but he can soften his strokes and show us forth the still night, touched to enchantment by the moon, or with a single star gleaming through the darkness. The moonlight scenes in 'Pan and Luna,' 'Christmas Eve,' 'Paracelsus,' 'Sordello,' and 'Ferishtah's Fancies' make up a gallery by themselves.

Perhaps it will not be going too far away from the subject to instance as a proof of Browning's feeling about birds that little poem which ought to be studied by every woman who so far stifles her womanly instincts and so seriously transgresses the laws of artistic fitness as to wear a dead bird or a part of a dead bird in her bonnet. In 'The Lady and the Painter,' the artist is rebuked for using a model to help out his art study, and is asked if he does not consider that he thus degrades womanhood in the person of his model. He returns,

> What
> — (Excuse the interruption) — clings
> Half-savage-like around your hat?
>
> *She.* Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird-wings.
> Next season, — Paris-prints assert, —
> We must go feathered to the skirt:
> My modiste keeps on the alert.
> Owls, hawks, jays — swallows most approve.

Then seriously, sadly, the Artist replies that a greater wrong has been done to womanhood by her who stands clothed with the murder of God's best of harmless beings, than by the Model, who knows well what absolves her, the reverent praise of the Artist for God's surpassing good, the divinity of the human form.

The thought of Wordsworth in his 'Ode to Immortality' was that a glory passes away from earth with the passing of childhood. Browning touches the same theme in the prologue to 'Asolando.' True is it, he says, that in youth an alien glow surrounds every common object, and the bush burns with terror and beauty but is unconsumed. In age the lambent flame is lost from the world, and though Italia's rare beauty crowds the eye, yet the bush is bare of the living presence. Yet, which is better, the optic glass which drapes each object in ruby and emerald, or that which reveals its shape clear-outlined, its inmost self shrouded by no fancy-haze? Browning has never a complaint to make of age. It is God who transcends and to whom he has come nearer by the plain truth, slowly and painfully attained. Yet sweet and mournful, for us at least, is the look backward: —

> How many a year, my Asolo,
> Since — one step just from sea to land —
> I found you, loved yet feared you so.

There are a few poems in which the nature element is so interwoven with the human emotion that they cannot be separated. In 'Two in the Campagna' Browning has almost caught in words that vague sense of an immanent personality of which we are ourselves a part, that feeling that there is possible some mental or spiritual attainment which includes all nature and all personality in itself. It is an impression, an aspiration, born out of some moment of exquisite harmony, when it seems as if the bars were about to be broken, not only between life and life but between the soul of man and the mystery of nature. In a moment the mood has vanished, and there is left only the infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts. Personality is sacred, inviolate for ever, no matter how we may dream of escaping its limitations. Yet for a moment everything seems possible, and in this seeming nature bears its own part.

Another poem of this sort, in which however the interweaving of nature and meaning is for a different purpose and expressed in a different way, is 'Childe Roland,' that splendid, heart-bracing romance of long endurance and indomitable will. The terrible journey which many of us, perhaps most of us, perhaps all of us, must make and make alone, is symbolised at every step by the strange country through which the knight passes, taking on the colour of his own thoughts and influencing them again in continued reaction. This is a poem in which every reader may legitimately find his own meaning, just as he may in any other tale of a quest, but its descriptive power is of an order not dependent on the significance of the Round Tower at which it leaves us.

There are other poems in which this close pressure of nature upon human experience is expressed, as in a few stanzas of 'By the Fireside,' when the lights and the shades made up a spell which the forests completed and then "relapsed to their ancient mood." In 'James Lee's Wife' the wind lends its moan to the unhappy wife, wailing like a dumb, wronged thing that would be righted, and the song goes on in long-drawn words that fit marvellously to the theme: —

> I know not any tone
> So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
> Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
> If they knew any way to borrow
> A pathos like thy own?

An example no less noteworthy is the scene in 'Pippa Passes,' when Ottima reminds Sebald of the thunderstorm in the forest: —

> Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
> Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
> And ever and anon some bright white shaft
> Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
> As if God's messenger, thro' the close wood screen,
> Plunged and re-plunged his weapon at a venture,

> Feeling for guilty thee and me; then broke
> The thunder like a whole sea overhead.

One more scene in which nature is brought into intimate, most intimate, relations with human feeling must be remembered. The closing lines of 'Saul' are a fit ending to that poem in which Browning has gone the whole round of creation. In so supreme a moment of revelation as that here imagined, nature is swept far beyond all limitations of actual existence. Its emotion is transcendent even as the revelation itself is transcendent, and experience has nothing to say to a moment like this. Nothing in the entire poem is more revelatory of Browning's genius than that he could close by such exquisite modulations, thoughts and words of such scope. After the gradually increasing passion of the poem, rising higher and higher until the consummate vision of the Christ that is to be breaks full on the mind of David, and the words of annunciation seem fairly wrenched from the agony of his inspiration, the reader holds himself breathless, and if he did not hasten to the conclusion, it would be almost impossible to imagine how Browning could release him from that surpassing moment without a loss of dignity, — how, feeling for the common chord again, the poet could slide by semi-tones and reach the resting-place, the C Major of this life. Browning has done just this by putting all nature into sympathy with the word of God uttered to man. David goes home through the witnesses, the cohorts about him, as a runner beset by the populace, and the strong monosyllables give a wonderful impression of power held in restraint, when

> the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
> Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge.

Then when the earth had at last sunk to rest, he saw the trouble and the tumult

die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent, — he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — "E'en so, it is so!"

INDEX.

'Abt Vogler,' 15, 33, 52, 177, 329.

Addison, 287, 439, 440, 470.

'Adonais,' Shelley's, 122, 442.

Æschylus, Browning's translation of his 'Agamemnon,' 370, 383, 384, 385; compared with Euripides, 384, 425, 426; on Homer, 407; and see 7, 191, 375, 382, 414, 415, 442.

'Agamemnon,' Browning's translation from Æschylus, 370, 383, 453, 462; difficult in both Greek and English, 384; unintelligibility of Browning's version illustrated, 385; its ruggedness true to the Greek original, 468; and see 368. Quoted, 385, 468.

Agnosticism, Browning's philosophy leads to, 325–327.

'Alastor,' Shelley's, 47, 441.

'Alkestis,' Euripides', Browning's paraphrase in 'Balaustion's Adventure,' 370, 371, 413, 417; Browning's interpretation, 30, 31, 372, 380, 418; Professor Moulton's criticism of the paraphrase, 430–436.

Anacreon, 363, 456.

'Ancient Mariner, The,' Coleridge's, 45, 186.

Anderson, Mary, description of Browning, 6.

'Andrea del Sarto,' 64, 106, 107, 110, 117, 139, 173, 181. Quoted, 110.

'Antigone,' Sophocles', 40, 364, 387, 446.

Antithesis of Love and Knowledge in 'Paracelsus,' 222–225, 227, 240, 243, 245, 340; in 'Reverie,' 225, 230; in 'Luria,' 261, 340; in 'Sordello,' 340, 342, 358.

'Any Wife to any Husband,' 91.

'Apparent Failure,' 329. Quoted, 332.

Aristophanes, 371, 376, 382, 413, 428, 429, 442.

'Aristophanes' Apology,' its length, 371, 377; its learning, 375, 377–379, 386, 414, 418; story of the poem, 376, 377, 379, 419–421; a defence of Greek tragedists against Aristophanes, 382, 421; presents Browning's opinion of Euripides, 411, 413, 414, 418, 421, 422–425, 428, 429; depicts Athens in its decadence, 466; and see 370, 453, 462, also under 'Heracles Mad.' Quoted, 376, *et seq.*, 412, 419, 420, 423, *et seq.*, 464.

Aristotle, his theism, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 23; on tragedy, 41, 193.

Arnold, Matthew, his classification of literature, 323; on Homer's style, 397; his 'Merope,' 442, 451; style of his Greek imitations, 467; and see 37, 39, 308, 439, 459, 470, 477, 481. Quoted, 281, 310.

Art, the Greek theory, 40, 41, and see 107, 108, 307, 364, 401, 410; the modern problem, 41, 42, 401; relation to philosophy, 99–106; ethical significance to Browning, 106, 206, 323; Renaissance influence on, 113–115; the relativity of all art as a basis of criticism, 162.

'Artemis Prologizes,' 366, 458, 459. Quoted, 458.
'As You Like It,' Shakespeare's, quoted, 179.
'Asolando,' 28, 166, 470, 484. See also 'Reverie' and 'Epilogue.'
'At the Mermaid,' quoted, 205.
'Atalanta in Calydon,' Swinburne's, 451, 459.
'Athanase,' Shelley's, 448.
'Aurora Leigh,' Mrs. Browning's, quoted, 115, 128.

Bagehot, Walter, quoted, 441.
'Balaustion's Adventure,' a study containing a paraphrase of Euripides' 'Alkestis,' 370–376, 462; and see 'Alkestis;' personality of Balaustion, 411, 464, 465, 469; Balaustion's opinion of Euripides, 411, *et seq.*; story of the poem, 414–417; imagination and classical study shown in the poem, 453, 464, 469. Quoted, 373, 415, 416, 417, 421, 422.
Balfour, A. J., quoted, 311, 316, 328.
Barrett, Lawrence, on 'The Blot in the 'Scutcheon' as an acting play, 250.
Beaumont, 285; and Fletcher, 271.
Beauty, Plato's teaching about, 41, 450; contrast between the Greek and Christian ideals of, 107, 108; beauty and dogma in Renaissance Art, 113, 114; Shelley influenced by Greek conceptions of, 445; Browning's little regard for outward, 453; the classic ideal reached in Balaustion, 464; and see 188.
'Bells and Pomegranates,' 2, 5, 249.
Berdoe, Dr., as a Browning critic, 223, 329, 435.
'Bishop Blougram's Apology,' an unnatural monologue, 64, 184; the strength of the poem, 176; not an argument against Roman Catholicism, 289, 290; and see 19, 59, 132, 188, 215, 279, 287, 291, 297, 350, 406. Quoted, 20, 176, 178.
'Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church, The,' 369, 483.
Blackwood's, criticism of Wordsworth, 153.
Blank Verse, Milton's, 157; Browning's skill in, 280.
'Blot in the 'Scutcheon, A,' romantic love in, 92; the moral strain unnatural, 211–213; as an acting play, 250; Dickens' praise, 283; a criticism of Mr. Sharp's, 285; and see 172, 219. Quoted, 92, 211, 212, 213, 285.
Botticelli, Sandro, 107, 114, 254.
'Bridge of Sighs, The,' Hood's, the triple rhymes, 171.
Brooke, Stopford, on Browning, 310, 327.
Brooks, Bishop, on Wordsworth's optimism, 320.
Browning, Mrs., allusions to her in Browning's poems, 94–96; 'Aurora Leigh,' quoted, 115, 128; rhyme in 'Cowper's Grave,' 171; her judgment of Euripides, 371, 422.
Browning, Robert, growth of his fame in America and England, 2, 3, 4; compared with Tennyson, 4, 5, 6; his appearance, 6; his theism, 7–34: original treatment of the conception of God, 8, 9, 16; intuition of God as Power, 16–21; of God as Love, 21–26; interest in the relation and reconciliation of the two intuitions, 22, 26, 31, 33, 34; interest in the Incarnation, 25, 26; his theism an intuition, not a philosophy, 34; use of monologue, 35–66: his character and the age as determining his choice of the monologue, 36–45; earliest experiments, 'Pauline,' 'Paracelsus,' and 'Sordello,' 46–55; tendency to coldness and monotony, 48, 52, 55, 65, 66; "discovery" of Italy, 55, 56; his masterpiece, 'The Ring and the Book,' 56; value of the plot to him, 59, 62, 63; his 'Caliban,' 67, *et seq.*; his meaning in the poem, 78–83; conception of the Christ, 80; theory of romantic love, 84–98: conception of love, 84, 91, 93, 96; influenced by Plato, Pe-

trarch, and Dante, 89, 90, 91, 94, 96; examples of his treatment of romantic love, 89–92; treatment of domestic love, 93, 94; romantic element in his own love, 94–96; his philosophy of art, 99–117: need of artistic expression, 100, 101; relation to nineteenth century philosophy, 102, 103; both a realist and an idealist, 104–106; his art-poems studies of character, 106–115; on objective and subjective poets, 115, 116; combined the characteristics of each, 117; showed in 'A Grammarian's Funeral' that apparent failure may be triumph, 118–129: attitude toward Love, Will, and Knowledge, 123–125; put stress on aim, not achievement, 125, 126; ethical value of his characters, 128; studies of conduct, 131, *et seq.;* characters of the calculating type, 132; the uncalculating type illustrated in 'A Soul's Tragedy,' 133–138; his sympathy with the uncalculating soul, 138–142; his central teaching — being more than doing, 145; anticipation in 'Paracelsus' of evolution theory, 150, 151; early criticism of Browning, 161; his affinity to the new criticism, 162; a master of rhyme, 164–172: variety of stanza-forms, 165, 166; avoidance of "end-stopt" lines, 166–169; faulty rhymes, 169–171; use of double and triple rhymes, 172; over-elaboration, 173; little use of imagery, 174–189: compared with Shakespeare in this respect, 175–181; sentiment more than imagery, 178; realism, 182, 183; imagination, 188; used an original motive in 'Strafford,' 190–202: 'Strafford' compared with 'Julius Cæsar,' 193–196; additions to historical fact, 197, 198; original treatment of the trial-scene, 199, 200; as a dramatic poet, 203–220: essentially dramatic, 205, 207, 208; contrasted with Shakespeare, 205–215, 217–219; supreme interest — development of a soul, 206; artistic limitations, 206, 208–210; his dramas not placed in a natural environment, 210–213, 218, 219; the main idea too obtrusive, 214, 215; Truth and Love in his dramas, 215–217; each character embodies one mood, 217, 218; humour rare, 219; monologue, his true vehicle, 220; depicted a mood in 'Paracelsus,' 222; his use of Love and Knowledge, 223, *et seq.;* his creed, strenuousness, 224; his Paracelsus and the real Paracelsus, 225–228, 231, *et seq.;* fondness for mysticism, 227, 239, 240, 242, 243; his view of the divine revelation, 229–231, 239–241, 243; showed in 'Paracelsus' the defect of the occultists, 239–242; reason for his tardy fame, 249, 250; his dramas not good acting plays, 250, 251; his careful revision of 'Luria,' 251; his small debt to historical fact in 'Luria,' 251–253; his Luria reminiscent of Othello, 257; his characteristic antithesis of heart against head illustrated in 'Luria,' 261; his influence due to the ethical quality of his work, 264; his 'Return of the Druses' shows careful study of Druse history, 271; melodramatic effects in his dramas, 273, 274, 283; his failure in 'Return of the Druses' to reproduce Oriental character, 275–278; his most skilful portraits, 279; metrical skill, 279, 280, 285, 286; defects in diction in the plays, 280–283, 285; few living characters in his plays, 285; constructive ingenuity, 285, 286; poetical treatment of ethical subjects the ground of his unique position, 287, 288; compared with Sainte-Beuve, 288; 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium' a study of character, not an attack on spiritism, 289, 290; had an unpromising subject for poetic treatment in Sludge, 290–294; not responsible for Sludge's philosophy, 295; his

optimism and Wordsworth's, 306–333: a representative of the new spirit in literature, 307, 308; meeting with Wordsworth, 321; knowledge and conduct as the basis of Browning's philosophy and art, 323, 324; his philosophy, 324–327; his poetry, 327, 328; his optimism based on his Christian theism, 328, 330, 331; as a prophet, 329; his obscurity, especially in 'Sordello,' 334–338; hampered by the rhyme, 338; lacked the restraint of dramatic form, 339; reason for abandoning in 'Sordello' the dramatic form, 339–341; beautiful utterances in 'Sordello,' 341; significance of the poem to Browning, 356; and see 358, 361, 362; nature of his interest in his dramatic creations, 360, 361; classical element in his poetry, 363–387: classical allusions, 364, 369, 375, 386; un-Greek in subject, point of view, and treatment, 364–367, 377, 386, 387; Greek paraphrases and translations, 370–373, 375–385; ability as translator, 370, 381, 384, 386; as critic of Greek drama, 373, 378; his spelling of Greek names, 374; unjust to Aristophanes, 376; compared with Homer, 388–410: unlike Homer in his ethical interest, 391, 401, 406; their different conceptions of the poetic gift, 394–396; a transcendentalist, 396; Homer's style and Browning's contrasted, 397–402, 404, 405; Browning an optimist, Homer a pessimist, 402–404; representative of their respective ages, 405–407; alike in dramatic quality, 407–409; severe in their moral judgments, 409; duration of their fame, 410; his opinion of Euripides as shown in the Balaustion poems, 411–437: as a scholar and critic, 412–414, 429; expressions of judgment on Euripides, 421–425; preference for Euripides over Æschylus and Sophocles, 425, 426; attitude towards Aristophanes, 428, 429; his 'Alkestis' criticised as misrepresenting Euripides, 429–436; his artistic use in the Balaustion poems of two historical incidents, 436; Browning's affinity for Greece, 440, 453, 463, 464; un-Greek by nature, 452, 468; differences in Greek influence on Browning and Shelley, 453–455, 470; his treatment of Greece, original and fruitful, 455, *et seq.*: early classical allusions in Shelley's manner, 456, 457; minor Greek poems, 458–461, 462, 469; as a critic of antiquity, 459, 469; first indication of devotion to Euripides in 'The Ring and the Book,' 462; the longer classic poems as showing his distinctive method, 462, 463–467; his rendering of Greek style, 467, 468; value of his delineations of Greek life, 468–470; nature in his poetry, 471–487: attitude towards science, 475; subordinated nature to human nature, 477; not indifferent to nature, 478, 482; comparisons in his early descriptions, 478, 479; later examples, 479, 480; his best descriptions delicate and apt, not detailed and elaborate, 481; sense for colour, 482; on nature and old age in 'Asolando,' 484; interweaving of nature and human emotion, especially in 'Saul,' 484–487. For quotations, see titles of poems.

Brutus, in 'Julius Cæsar,' compared with Pym, in 'Strafford,' 194–196.

Bryant, William Cullen, 149.

Bury, on Euripides, 428.

Butler, Samuel, 286.

'By the Fireside,' a picture of domestic love, 93; and see 252, 485. Quoted, 94.

Byron, Lord, 171, 205, 286, 308, 473. Quoted, 474.

Caird, Edward, on Wordsworth, 320.

Caird, John, 316. Quoted 329.

Calderon, 274, 442.

'Caliban upon Setebos,' study of the poem, 67–83: sources, 67, 68; Caliban's conception of God, 70, *et seq.*; belief in an Over-God (the Quiet), 72, 73; deductions from the poem, 81–83; and see 15, 16, 20, 26, 28, 188, 289, 290, 291, 297. Quoted, 70, *et seq.*
Carducci, 452.
Carlyle, Thomas, 1, 37, 38, 188, 307, 308, 370.
'Cavalier Songs,' the rhyme of, 169.
'Cenci, The,' Shelley's, 446.
Chadwick, John, quoted, 478.
Channing, W. E., quoted, 82; and see 70, 149.
'Character of the Happy Warrior,' Wordsworth's, quoted, 318.
'Charge of the Light Brigade,' Tennyson's, the measure, 172.
'Charles Avison, Parleyings with,' quoted, 162.
Chaucer, 6, 203, 285.
Chénier, 464.
'Childe Roland,' an illustration of indomitable will, 124; the rhyme, 166; descriptions of nature, 185–187, 485. Quoted, 186.
'Christabel,' Coleridge's, 154, 186.
'Christmas-Eve,' 15, 25, 483. Quoted, 78.
Cicero, quoted, 144.
Cimabue, 107, 114.
Clark, Miss Elizabeth M., on Browning's rhymes, 169–171.
Classic ideal of art, 40.
Classicism, Browning's relation to, 367, 387; Shelley's, spontaneous, 442, 444; and see 366. See also *Greece*.
'Cleon,' as a picture of Greek life and character, 369, 370; study of a Greek of the decadence, 459–461; and see 401, 402, 404, 405, 406, 462. Quoted, 460, 461.
'Cloud, The,' Shelley's, quoted, 444.
Clough, A. H., 308.
Cockney School, 153, 160.
Coleridge, S. T., 1, 184, 381; and see 'Ancient Mariner,' and 'Christabel.'
'Colombe's Birthday,' Truth and Love in, 215, 216; and see 139, 218, 250, 283, 284, 359. Quoted, 216, 284.
Colour, Browning's sense for, 482.
Comedy, Browning and, 209; union of Tragedy and Comedy, 378, 424, 469; discussion of Tragedy and Comedy in 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 421; and see 187, 429.
Conduct, Browning's study of, 131; relation to Browning's art, 323.
Cooke, George Willis, his Guide-Book, quoted, 253, 255, 361, 474.
Cordelia in 'King Lear,' 213, 219, 257.
Corot, 37.
Corson, Prof. Hiram, quoted, 81, 171
'Count Gismond,' quoted, 168.
'Cristina,' a study of romantic love, 89, 90; the antithesis of, 261. Quoted, 90.
Criticism, early nineteenth century, 154, 161; of the Elizabethan Age, 155–157; of the classical era, 157, 158; the latter gave rise to a school of criticism, 158; the new criticism, 161–163; the 'Higher Criticism,' 309; Browning's criticism of Greek Drama, 378, 413, 414, 421.

Dante, romantic love in, 84, 86, 87, 88, 96, 97; mention of Sordello, 361; and see 4, 43, 94, 95, 101, 188, 254, 256, 442. Quoted, 96, 98, 137.
Darwin, Charles, 1, 151, 279, 405.
'Death in the Desert, A,' 287; see also (John) 17, 25, 28; (Pamphylax) 184. Quoted, 103.
Dennis, John, criticism of Pope, 158.
Desdemona, in 'Othello,' 59, 213, 256, 262.
'Development,' 363.
Dickens, on 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,' 283; and see 38, 187.
'Dis Aliter Visum,' its internal rhyme, 166.
'Divine Comedy,' Dante's, 101, 370.
Domett, Alfred, quoted, 249.
'Don Juan,' Byron's, its rhymes, 171.

Donne, W. B., quoted, 434.
Dowden, Professor, quoted, 67, 310.
Drama, not congenial to the spirit of the times, 44, 45; the best instrument for revealing character, 206; Greek Drama, 364, 390; Browning's able criticism of Greek Drama, 378, 413; Swinburne's and Arnold's imitations of Greek Drama, 451.
Dramatic Poetry: motive, 190–192; characteristics of Browning's, 205, *et seq.*; 273, 274, 283, 340; the restraints of dramatic form, 339; dramatic quality in Homer, 407.
'Dramatis Personæ,' 458, 462.
Drayton, his 'Polyolbion,' 286.
Druses. See 'Return of the Druses.'
Dryden, 157, 158, 159.
Dumas, 274.

'Easter-Day,' 15, 25. Quoted, 168.
'Echetlos,' 463.
Eckhart, Meister, 13.
Edinburgh Review, The, 153. Quoted, 154.
'Electra,' Euripides', 379, 418, 426, 436.
Elizabethan Age, criticism in the, 155, 158; poetical activity, 159, and see 472, 473.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, his 'Threnody,' 122; 'Rhodora,' 148; relation to nature, 476; and see 38, 150, 264, 307, 385. Quoted, 1, 41, 78, 127, 144, 148, 149, 151, 253, 313, 344.
'Endymion,' Keats', 154, 445.
'Englishman in Italy, The,' 128.
'Epilogue' to 'Asolando,' quoted, 333.
'Epipsychidion,' Shelley's, 441, 448. Quoted, 449.
'Erechtheus,' Swinburne's, 442.
'Essay on Criticism,' Pope's, 158.
'Essay on Shelley,' Browning's, 115. Quoted, 116.
Ethical element in Browning's work, 128, 206, 264, 287, 288, 391, 406.
Ethics, the popular form of philosophy to-day, 37; evolution applied to ethics, 146–151; the completest science of man, 209; literature and ethics united, 257; duality of philosophy and ethics in Browning, 324; a branch of æsthetics to the Greeks, 393.
Euripides, Browning's preference for, 27, 30, 371, 372, 376, 381, 425, 428, 429, 462; his theistic belief as depicted in 'The Ring and the Book,' 27, 29–31; Fate in his plays, 191, 427; 'Medea,' 364, 367; Professor Verrall's 'Euripides the Rationalist,' quoted, 372, 380; 'Helen,' 375; Browning's critical estimate of Euripides, 378, 411, *et seq.*; 'Electra,' 379, 418, 436; compared with Æschylus, 383, 384; the precursor of Shakespeare, 424, 427; contrasted with Sophocles and Æschylus, 425, 426; treatment of the gods, 426; and see 272. See also 'Alkestis' and 'Heracles Mad.'
'Evelyn Hope,' romantic love in, 89, 91.
Evil, the problem of, Browning's solution, 31–33, 324, *et seq.*; Shelley's solution, 32; Sordello on the, 351.
Evolution, and ethics, 146–151; the theory foreshadowed in 'Paracelsus,' 151, 475; as applied to literary interpretation, 309; Tennyson on, 322, 475.
Examiner, The, 153.
'Excursion, The,' Wordsworth's, 56.

Faraday, 144.
Faust, 221, 222, 223, 244, 439; Goethe's 'Faust,' 4.
'Felix Holt,' George Eliot's, quoted, 144.
'Ferishtah's Fancies,' 15. 25, 26, 467, 470, 483. Quoted, 477, and see 'A Pillar at Sebzevar.'
Fielding, Henry, 285.
'Fifine at the Fair,' the Alexandrine measure, 286; Greek element in, 375; and see 215, 220, 367, 455. Quoted, 218.
Fiske, John, his 'Idea of God' and 'Destiny of Man,' 151, 316. Quoted, 311, 316.

Fitzgerald, his Œdipus translation, 383.
Flaubert, Gustave, 279, 288.
Fletcher, 272, 280; Beaumont and, 271.
'Flight of the Duchess, The,' its rhyme, 172, 286; and see 482.
Florence, Browning's studies of its painters, 102, 106, *et seq.*; its influence in 'Luria,' 254–256.
'Forgiveness, A,' 173, 181, 183, 185. Quoted, 182.
Fra Angelico, 114, 116, 254.
'Fra Lippo Lippi,' illustrates Browning's philosophy of art, 112–116; and see 59, 64, 107, 117, 139, 181, 184, 287, 374. Quoted, 112, 114, 115, 177, 477.
'Francis Furini, Parleyings with,' quoted, 125, 326.
Freedom, Shelley and Browning votaries of, 440; influence on Shelley of the Greek ideal, 445, 446, 447; Browning's conception, 454; and see 188, 472.
Fuller, Margaret, 2, 4.
'Fust and his Friends,' in 'Parleyings,' 15.

Gardiner, S. R., on Strafford, 191, 197, 198.
Gascoigne, George, quoted, 164.
George Eliot, 37, 38, 217, 308. Quoted, 138, 144.
'Gerard de Lairesse, Parleyings with,' 469. Quoted, 480.
Giotto, 107, 114, 145, 255, 366.
Gladstone, W. E., 389, 407.
'Glove, The,' its rhyme, 172.
Goethe, place in German literature, 4; and see 38, 105, 125, 221, 367, 412, 442.
Goncourt, quoted, 5.
Gordon, "Chinese," 'Paracelsus' his favourite poem, 143; anecdote, 143.
Gothic element in Browning, 366, 452; wanting in Shelley, 441.
'Grammarian's Funeral, A,' as exemplifying strenuousness, 23, 224; comments on the poem, 118–129: a song of exultation, 118, 122; the Grammarian, 118, 119, 121, 122; vocabulary and style, 121, 128, 129; compared with famous dirges, 122, 123; the key-note, 124, 128; nature in the poem, 128. Quoted, 118, 119, 122, 125, 129, 145.
Gray, Thomas, the 'Elegy,' 122, 397; and see 363. Quoted, 398.
Greece, her domination of the thought of the world, 390, 438–440, 462, 470; in Euripides' time, 426; Shelley's instinct for, 440–451, 465, 470; Greece and the Victorian poets, 451; Browning's relation to Greece, 452–470.

Hamilton, Sir William, 326.
'Hamlet,' Shakespeare's, Browning's dramas compared with, 211, 218; and see 45, 173, 181, 188, 210, 277. Quoted, 179.
Harvey, Gabriel, 155, 157.
Hawkwood, Sir John, 252.
Hegel, 106, 396.
Heine, 4.
'Helen,' Euripides', 375.
'Hellas,' Shelley's, quoted, 447.
'Heracles Mad' of Euripides, Browning's translation in 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 370, 377, 380, 413, 419, 421; excellence of the translation, 381, 382, 383, 384, 386, 429; frank criticism of the gods, in the drama, 426, 427.
Herodotus, 386.
Hesiod, 368.
'Home Thoughts from Abroad,' 482. Quoted, 178.
Homer, the voice of his generation, 43, 405; compared with Browning, 388–410: reasons for his unique position, 389–391, 399; a man of the world, 392; his philosophy, 392–394; the poetic gift — his idea and Browning's, 394–396; his style, 397–399; his style and Browning's compared, 399–402; a pessimist, 402–404; points in common with Browning, 404–409; his enduring fame, 410; and see 7, 42, 363, 364, 368, 442. Quoted, 394, 395, 403.

Hood, Thomas, rhymes in 'The Bridge of Sighs,' 171.
Horace, 42, 155, 287, 364, 369.
'House,' quoted, 205.
'How it Strikes a Contemporary,' 6.
'How They Brought the Good News,' 169, 250.
Hugo, Victor, 1, 188, 190, 281. Quoted, 144.
Humour, rare in Browning, 219.
'Hymn of Apollo,' Shelley's, quoted, 443.
'Hyperion,' Keats', 445.

Iago, in 'Othello,' compared with Braccio, in 'Luria,' 259; and see 62.
Idealism, Browning's, 20, 104, 105, 231, 239; of the old Florentine painters, 107, *et seq.*; of Kant and his followers, 105, 229, 231, 232, 236; and see 307, 448.
'Idyls of the King,' Tennyson's, 280.
'Iliad,' Homer's, interest of the story, 391; depicts the typical virtues, 405; eloquence, 407; dramatic quality, 407; and see 167, 363, 364, 394. Quoted, 403.
Imagery, poetic, Browning's little use of, 174, 185; examples from Shakespeare and Browning, 175–177; these poets compared in use of imagery, 178–181; distinguished from description, 181–183; as ornament to narrative, 184–186.
'Imitation of Christ,' 14.
Impressionist, Browning not an, 183; Homer was one, 399.
'In a Balcony,' Truth and Love in, 215, 216; and see 212, 219, 377. Quoted, 178, 216, 325.
'In a Gondola,' 250. Quoted, 481.
'In a Year,' quoted, 20, 168.
Incarnation, Browning's interest in the doctrine of the, 25, 26, 241; and see 29, 31.
'In Memoriam,' Tennyson's, its bad rhymes, 170; statement of evolution theory, 475; and see 5, 17, 329. Quoted, 319.
'Inn Album, The,' 132, 220, 286. Quoted, 480.
Isaiah, 176, 188.
Italian art, 102, 106, *et seq.*; 254, 255.
Italy, Browning and, 55, 56, 66, 452.
'Ivan Ivanovitch,' 173, 181, 261, 409.
'Ixion,' 15, 26, 28, 29. Quoted, 23.

Jacobs, Joseph, on Tennyson's bad rhymes, 169, 170.
James Lee's Wife,' 185, 485. Quoted, 177, 485.
Jebb, Professor, his translation of 'Œdipus,' 383.
Jones, Henry, his 'Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher,' quoted, 105, 261, 327, 340.
Jonson, Ben, 157, 217.
'Julius Cæsar,' Shakespeare's, comparison of 'Strafford' and, 193–196. Quoted, 179.

Kant, the idealism of, 105, 229, 231, 232, 236; and see 106, 230, 326.
Karshish. See 'Strange Medical Experience of Karshish.'
Keats, John, his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' 41; influence seen in 'Pauline,' 47, 48; Greek spirit in, 443, 444, 445; nature worship, 473; and see 39, 154, 157, 160, 308. Quoted, 42, 55.
'King Victor and King Charles,' 215, 264, 283, 284.
Knight, William, his 'Aspects of Theism,' quoted, 317.
Knowledge, Browning's attitude towards, 125; antithesis between Love and Knowledge in 'Paracelsus,' 223-225, 227, 230, 240, 243.

'Laboratory, The,' 182.
'Lady and the Painter, The,' quoted, 483.
Lake School, critics and the, 153, 154.
Landor, Walter Savage, commendation of Browning, 6, 250; and see 184, 321, 335, 464.

Lanier, Sidney, on rhyme, 164.
'La Saisiaz,' expresses Browning's own belief, 15, 19; nature and the human element in, 128, 482. Quoted, 19, 125, 325, 482.
'Last Ride Together, The,' 125.
Leighton, Sir Frederick, 422.
Lessing, quoted, 76.
'Letters of Travel,' Shelley's, 445.
'Life in a Love,' 33.
Lincoln, Abraham, 150.
Lisle, Leconte de, 439, 452.
Literary Gazette, The, on 'Prometheus,' 154.
Longfellow, H. W., as translator contrasted with Browning, 370; and see 172, 365, 388. Quoted, 126.
Loti, Pierre, 278.
Love, Browning's doctrine of the divine, 22–24; Plato's conception of love, 84–86, 448–450; romantic love in Dante and Petrarch, 87–89; in Browning, 89–97; Love and Knowledge in 'Paracelsus,' 223–225, 227, 230, 240, 243; of Nature in Wordsworth, 313, *et seq.*; difference in Shelley's and Browning's conceptions of love, 455; and see 124, 215.
'Love among the Ruins,' quoted, 481.
'Love in a Life,' 33.
'Lovers' Quarrel, A,' the rhyme of, 166.
Lowell, J. R., an early reviewer of Browning, 2; on Wordsworth, 320; and see 388.
'Luria,' its first appearance, 249, 250; historical basis, 251–253; Florence, — the scene, 254–256; Luria, the man, 256–258; Braccio, 259, 260; antithesis of the play, 261, and see 215, 340; moral significance, 262, 263; Luria compared with Othello, 284; and see 56, 139, 218, 283. Quoted, 215, 255, 257, 258, 260, 284.
Luther, 150. Quoted, 144.
'Lycidas,' Milton's, 122.

'Macbeth,' Shakespeare's, a striking image in, 175; scene in 'Return of the Druses' compared, 274, 281; and see 212, 217. Quoted, 175.
Machiavelli, 256.
Macready, 3, 321.
'Mad-House Cells,' 63.
Mahaffy, J. P., quoted, 413, 414, 430, 431.
Manner, as a test of a poet's originality, 7, 8.
Marlowe, 280.
Martineau, James, quoted, 144; and see 316.
Massinger, 280, 285.
'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha,' quoted, 214.
Maupassant, Guy de, 'The Confession,' quoted, 182.
'Medea' of Euripides, 364, 367.
Mediævalism, Browning's interest in, 369. See also *Middle Ages*.
'Meeting at Night,' 481.
Melodramatic effects in Browning's plays, 273, 274, 283.
'Men and Women,' 33, 94, 166, 458.
Mencius, quoted, 144.
'Merchant of Venice,' Shakespeare's, 179. Quoted, 210.
Meredith, George, 153, 285.
Meres, Francis, on Shakespeare, 156, 158.
'Merope,' Arnold's, 442, 451.
Metre, Browning's skill in, 279, 280, 286; of 'Pheidippides,' 386.
Michael Angelo, 188, 252, 254, 370. Quoted, 255.
Michelet, 188.
Middle Ages, painting in the, 102; religious fanaticism of the, 275; Browning's interest in the, 457; and see 44, 54, 118.
'Midsummer Night's Dream,' Shakespeare's, quoted, 185, 187.
Mill, John Stuart, on Wordsworth's poetry, 320; and see 37, 102.
Millet, 37, 65.
Milton, as an epic poet, 42, 44, 45, 208; 'Lycidas,' 122; contemporary criticism, 157; and see 203, 363, 372.
'Minor Prophet, A,' George Eliot's, quoted, 138.

Monism, Oriental, an element in Christian faith, 13, 14; in Browning's conception of God, 17, 18, 21, 26; in Paracelsus' creed, 242, 248.
Monologue, Browning's development of the, 44, 45, 184, 287; early examples, 'Pauline,' Paracelsus,' and 'Sordello,' 46–55; 'The Ring and the Book,' as the crowning example, 56, *et seq.*; monologue peculiarly suited to Browning, 65, 66, 220; in Browning's dramas, 273, 283; Sainte-Beuve's monologues, 288.
Monotheism, Ethical, of Israel, an element in Christian theology, 10, 11, 14; Aristotle's, 11, 12, 21.
Morris, William, quoted, 312.
Moschus, 122.
Moulton, R. G., on 'Balaustion's Adventure,' 430–436.
Mulnhausen, the minnesinger, 87.
'My Last Duchess,' 181, 182, 183, 184. Quoted, 167.
Myers, F. W., his 'Science and a Future Life' quoted, 316, 329.
Mysticism, in Christian theology, 14; of Paracelsus, 225, 231, *et seq.*; Browning's, 240, 242, 243.

Nature, in Browning's theistic belief, 16, *et seq.*, 229; in Euripides' theism, 30; Giotto's love of, 114; to Paracelsus and the Occultists, 231, *et seq.*; Wordsworth's relation to, 313–318, 473, 474; in Greek literature, 471; in the Elizabethan poets, 472; effect of democratic and scientific ideas on the poetry of nature, 472–476; in Tennyson and Emerson, 476; characteristics of Browning's poetic use of nature, 477–487, and see 'A Grammarian's Funeral,' 'Childe Roland,' and 'Saul.'
'Ned Bratts,' 139.
Neo-Paganism, Arnold's and Swinburne's contrasted with Shelley's, 442, 451; Keats' different from Shelley's, 445.
Newman, J. H., 37, 38, 308.
'Numpholeptos,' 177, 385.

Objectivity, Shakespeare's, 207; Browning's, 365; and see 116, 117.
Obscurity, Lake and Cockney Schools criticised for, 153, 154; nature of Browning's, 334–336, 399, 400; in 'Sordello,' 334, 337–341; not always a fault, 336, 337.
Occultism, of Paracelsus, 231, *et seq.*
'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' Keats', 41. Quoted, 42.
'Ode to Immortality,' Wordsworth's, 153, 329, 484.
'Ode to Liberty,' Shelley's, 447.
'Odyssey,' Homer's, its perfection, 364, 387; the bards in, 394, 395; typical Greek virtues in, 405. Quoted, 395, 403.
Œdipus plays of Sophocles, translations of, 383.
'Old Pictures in Florence,' 102, 107. Quoted, 108 (331, 364, 408, 410, 452, 454).
Omar Khayyam, 177.
'One Word More,' 94. Quoted, 94 (178), 95, 185.
Optimism, basis of, 311, 312; Wordsworth's, 312–321; Browning's, 321–333; and see 402, 437.
'Origin of Species,' Darwin's, 151, 475.
Originality, tests of a poet's, 7, 8; Browning's, as tested by his manner of treating the conception of God, 8, 9, 16.
Orr, Mrs. Sutherland, in her 'Life of Browning,' 227, 400.
'Othello,' Shakespeare's, 182, 188, 218, 253; Luria compared with Othello, 257, 259, 284. Quoted, 179.
Over-God, the, 27–31; and see 72, 73.
Ovid, 364, 368, 369.

'Pacchiarotto,' its rhymes, 172; and see 139. Quoted, 334.
'Pan and Luna,' 483.
Pantheism, influence on the Christian conception of God, 13, 14, 24; and see 21, 316, 444.
'Paracelsus,' a monologue in dialogue form, 46, 49; Browning's expla-

nation of the method used, 49; sketch of the poem, 49–52; lyric beauties, 52, 53; Paracelsus' failure, 123, 126; as illustrating the uncalculating soul, 140–142; as foreshadowing Evolution, 150, 151, 475; the problem of the poem, 221–248: a poem of the 'Faust-cycle,' 221; the motive, the antithesis between "loving" and "knowing," 222–225, 227, 240, 243, 245; character of Paracelsus, 225–228, 231, *et seq.;* his occultism, 231–233, 236, 237; his quest, 233–239, 244, 245; the defects of occultism, 239, 240, 242; Aprile, the "lover," 243; parallelism with 'Karshish,' and 'Saul,' 239, 240, 241, 243; significance of the meeting of Paracelsus and Aprile, 245, 246; Paracelsus' failure at Basel, 246, 247; the meaning of the poem — not outer nature but human nature reveals God, 248; length of the monologues, 364, 371; rare classical allusions, 368; descriptions of nature, 482, 483; and see 2, 4, 5, 15, 16, 18, 21, 25, 48, 54, 79, 220, 264, 323, 338, 340, 406, 457. Quoted, 22, 50, 52, 53, 79, 105, 123, 140, 141, 142, 143, 150, 151, 180, 233, 234, 235, 243, 323, 331, 369.

'Paradise Lost,' Milton's, 157.

'Parleyings,' 15; and see 'Charles Avison,' 'Francis Furini,' and 'Gerard de Lairesse.'

'Pauline,' reception of the poem, 2, 46, 161; a monologue, 46; shows influence of Keats and Shelley, 47, 48, 456, 457; quotable lines in, 48; compared with 'Sordello,' 338, 341, 346; Browning's plan in writing the poem, 360; classical allusions, 368, 456, 457,; nature descriptions, 478, 479; and see 21, 463, 469. Quoted, 47, 48, 49, 357, 368, 398 (456), 457, 479.

'Pericles and Aspasia,' Landor's, 464.

Pessimism, 311, 351; Homer's, 402, 403.

Petrarch, 4, 84, 87, 88, 89.

'Phædrus,' Plato's, 85, 86, 91.

'Pheidippides,' an artistic rendering of a Greek myth, 386, 463; and see 17, 139. Quoted, 132, 386, 463.

Philosophy, Greek, influence on Christian belief, 11, 12; relation to art, 99–106; Browning's philosophy of art in his art-poems, 107, *et seq.;* Wordsworth's optimism and philosophy, 315–317; relation of Browning's philosophy to his optimism, 324–328; Homer's, 392–394; Shelley's, 448–450; and see *Kant, Plato, Spencer, Idealism, Transcendentalism.*

'Pictor Ignotus,' 111, 139. Quoted, 111.

'Pied Piper of Hamlin, The,' 219, 250.

'Pillar at Sebzevar, A,' quoted, 125, 325.

Pindar, 364, 385, 387.

'Pippa Passes,' classic element in, 457; and see 2, 56, 59, 128, 139, 175, 249, 359. Quoted, 175 (485), 178 (231).

Plato, contribution to theistic doctrine, 11; influence on Browning, 21, 89, 90, 91, 454, 455; on Love in the 'Symposium,' 84, 85, 448–450; in the 'Phædrus,' 85, 86, 91; influence on Shelley, 441, 442, 448–450; and see 41, 87, 97, 105, 301, 390, 392. Quoted, 100.

Plutarch, 86, 379, 390, 436.

Poetry, of the nineteenth century, 38, 39, 41, 42; classic ideal of, 40; anticipates science, 150, 151, 475; Browning's "gospel" of the province of poetry, 288, and see 38, 65, 100, 401; the varying standards, 294; relation of science and poetry, 321–323; Homer's conception of, 394–396; poetry of nature as affected by democracy and science, 472–476.

Pollock, Lady, 3.

Pope, Alexander, reflected the taste of his time, 157, 159; present opinion of him, 158; his rhymes, 166, 167; and see 287.

'Porphyria's Lover,' 365.
Posnett, on the relativity of art, 162.
Potter, Robert, his translations from Euripides quoted, 432, 433, 434.
'Prelude, The,' Wordsworth's, 313, 320. Quoted, 314, 317, 318.
'Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau,' 132, 215.
'Princess, The,' Tennyson's, 406.
'Prologue' to 'Asolando,' quoted, 484.
'Prometheus,' Æschylus', 375, 383.
'Prometheus,' Shelley's, 31, 32, 154, 442, 444.
'Prospice,' 329, 365. Quoted, 365.

Quarterly Review, 2, 153. Quoted, 154.
Queen Elizabeth, 37, 38, 160.

'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' fine image in, 176; and see 15, 33, 128. Quoted, 24, 80, 145 (178), 330, 331, 365.
Rabelais, 176.
Raphael, 94, 95, 117, 254, 383.
Realism, Browning's, 104, 182, 183; Andrea del Sarto's, 106, 110, 117.
'Red Cotton Night-Cap Country,' 139, 286.
Relativity of art, 162; of knowledge, 326, 392.
Religion, Homer's, 402–404; and see *Theism*.
Renaissance, in Browning's poetry, 21, 119, 221, 242, 255, 362, 453, 469; influence on art, 113–115; and see, 439.
Repplier, Agnes, quoted, 393.
'Return from Parnassus, The,' contemporary comment on Shakespeare and the status of poets, 156.
'Return of the Druses, The,' a study of, 264–288: the Druses, 265–271; the plot, 271–275; melodramatic effects, 273, 274; Djabal, the central figure, 275–277; Anael, 277, 278; other characters, 279; its style, 279–283; beauties of metre, 280, 285; defects in diction, 280–283. Quoted, 271, 273, 274, 276, 277, 278, 280, *et seq.*
'Reverie' in 'Asolando,' expresses Browning's theology, 15, 229; Love and Power in, 18, 225, 230. Quoted, 19, 230.
Revival of Learning, 119, 457.
'Revolt of Islam, The,' Shelley's, 446, 447.
Rhyme, Browning a master of, 164, 165, 286, 381; his complex rhyme-structure, 165, 166; heroic couplets with "run-on" lines, 167, 168; faulty rhymes in Browning and Tennyson, 169–171, and see 385; double and triple rhymes, 171, 172; Browning's first rhymed poem, 'Sordello,' 338, 339.
Richardson, Samuel, his 'Clarissa Harlowe,' 286.
'Ring and the Book, The,' Browning's masterpiece, 46, 56, 220, 367; the plot, 56–58; the characters: Pompilia, as a literary creation, 36, 59, 188; her character, 60, 128; and see 29, 95, 184, 407, 411, 462, 469; Caponsacchi, 61, 128, 139; Count Guido, his theology, 15, 16, 26, 28, 29; his defence, 61, 62; Browning's interest in the character, 132, 215, 325, 406, 409; the Pope, his theology, 15, 18, 19, 29; and see 63, 184, 289, 462; the lawyers, 64, 65; artistic advantages in the plot, 62, 63; the construction, 63–65, 286; dramatic quality, 207, 408; contrasted with the 'Iliad,' 391; a study of Christian society in a corrupt period, 462. Quoted, 30, 38, 57, 60, 61, 62, 95, 100, 139, 215, 220.
Ritchie, Mrs. Anne Thackeray, comparison of Tennyson and Browning, 4.
Rome, Half Rome and The Other Half, in 'The Ring and the Book,' 64, 408.
Rossetti, D. G., 39, 49, 308.
Rückert, 381.
Ruskin, John, 307, 394, 477.

St. Bernard, his 'Hymn to the Crucified One,' 108.

Sainte-Beuve, 288.
Saintsbury, G. E. B., quoted, 327.
'Sandpiper, The,' Celia Thaxter's, quoted, 147.
Sardou, 187.
'Saul,' David's prophecy of the Incarnation, 25, 241, 486, and see 27, 28, 29; descriptions of nature, 184, 185, 482; parallelism of thought in 'Paracelsus,' 243; harmony of nature and human emotion, 486; and see 15, 128, 325, 329. Quoted, 145, 241, 330, 487.
Schiller, 4, 105, 106. Quoted, 228.
Schopenhauer, 350, 351.
Science, the *Calibanism* of, 83; influence on Browning, 104; Sainte-Beuve a representative of the scientific spirit in literature, 288; poetry and science, see *Poetry*.
Scott, Sir Walter, 1, 207, 208, 274, 285.
Seriousness, the note of the passing generation, 37.
Shakespeare, use of earlier plays, 7, 251; his Caliban the germ of Browning's, 67, 68; contemporary opinion of, 156, 158, 159; his imagery compared with Browning's, 175, 179, 181, 185; creative power, 188; the Nemesis of Conscience in his dramas, 191, 192; Browning's 'Strafford' compared with 'Julius Cæsar,' 193–196; comparison of Shakespeare and Browning as dramatic poets, 205–219: Shakespeare's objectivity, 205, 207; his Comedy, 208; the natural environment of his plays, 210, 211, 212, 217, 218, 219; the subtle unity, 214, 215; reference to Shakespeare in 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 378, 424, 469; likeness of Euripides to Shakespeare, 428; and see 37, 45, 128, 161, 203, 256, 274, 281, 282, 285, 363, 408, 454, 477. Quoted, 68, 175, 179, 185, 187, 195, 270.
Sharp, William, 2, 283, 285. Quoted, 327.
Shelley, Mrs., 188.
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, conflict between Love and Power in his 'Prometheus,' 31–33; classed with Wordsworth and Browning, 39; influence on Browning's 'Pauline,' 47, 48, 456, 457; his 'Adonais,' 122, 442; unfinished play on Charles I., 192; Greek spirit in, 439–451: disciple of Greece, 439, 440; acquaintance with Greek literature, 441; his myth impulse, 443, 444; fusion of classic and modern in 'Prometheus Unbound,' 444; influence of Greek conception of beauty, 445; of Greek ideal of freedom, 446; of Platonic philosophy, 448–450; classic influence on Browning and Shelley contrasted, 453–455, 463, 464, 465, 467, 470; and see 56, 105, 308, 335, 452, 473. Quoted, 159, 438, 442, 443, 444, 447, 449, 450, 451, 470.
Sidney, Sir Philip, 37, 156. Quoted, 156.
Signorelli, Luca, 114.
'Skeleton in Armour, The,' Longfellow's, the measure, 172.
'Sludge the Medium, Mr.,' Sludge as an object of interest to Browning, 132, 406, 409; the poem not an attack on spiritism, 290; Sludge as a poetic subject, 290, 293; traits of Sludge's character, 291–293; value of the study, 293; dramatic interest, 295; Sludge's philosophy of life, 295–303; his defence of lying, 299; and see 184, 367. Quoted, 291, 295, 297, *et seq.*, 304.
Snider, Denton, on Shakespeare, 195.
Socrates, 365, 392; in Plato's 'Symposium,' 424, 448, 449.
'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,' 181.
Sophocles, Fate in his dramas, 191; the perfection of 'Antigone,' 364, 387; Browning's allusions to, 368, 373, 379; least attractive of the Greek tragedists to Browning, 383; compared with Euripides, 414, 425; and see 7, 377, 382, 384, 411, 446, 466, 467.
'Sordello,' as a monologue, 46, 54, 55; sketch of, 53; Browning's first

poem of Italy, 55; a masterpiece of rhyme, 167; its obscurity, 334, *et seq.*: due to its rhyme and its lack of dramatic form, 338, 339, 341; collision of head and heart in the poem, 340, 342, 358; its beauties, 341, 347, 357; the story and its meaning, 342–362; the hero's failure as poet, 344–348; failure as man, 349–358; the other characters, 358; Dante's mention of the Sordello of history, 361; and see 5, 249, 365, 369, 406, 454, 457, 482, 483. Quoted, 127, 330, 336, 339, 343, *et seq.*, 365, 369, 464.

'Soul's Tragedy, A,' the story, 133–136; its lessons, 136–138. Quoted, 133, 134, 135, 136, 145.

Spencer, Herbert, his philosophy, 102, 103, 326, 392, 401, and see 17; on style, 337; and see 37, 151.

Spenser, contemporary praise of, 155, 156; his Platonism, 448; and see 37, 203, 439.

'State of Innocence, The,' Dryden's, 157.

'Statue and the Bust, The,' 23, 124, 261, 358. Quoted, 180, 224.

Stedman, E. C., quoted, 474.

Stephen, Leslie, on Wordsworth, 320.

Sterne, Laurence, 285.

Stowe, Mrs., criticism of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' 393.

'Strafford,' difficulty of the subject, 190–192; "England's fate" the motive, 191, 197, 198; compared with 'Julius Cæsar,' 193–196; sketch of the play, 196–202; Browning's liberties with historical record, 197; originality of the trial-scene, 199; and see 2, 215, 250, 264, 338. Quoted, 199, 200, 201, 202.

'Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, The,' bears witness to the doctrine of the Incarnation, 25, 240; and see 29, 31; Karshish an occultist, 239, 240; parallel with the thought of 'Paracelsus' and 'Saul,' 241, 243; and see 15, 326, 459. Quoted, 185, 240, 241.

Strenuousness, as an element of Love, 23, 32, 224; of Paracelsus, 244, 245, 246.

Style, Browning's, not sufficiently studied, 279, and see 8, 78; obscurity may add force to, 337; a trick of Browning's, 373; Homer's, 397–399; defects in Browning's, 399–402; Greek quality of Shelley's, 441; Browning's rendering of Greek, 467.

Subjective poet, Browning on the, 116.

Sumner, Charles, 144.

'Sun, The,' 26.

Swedenborg, 22, 396. Quoted, 144.

Swift, Dean, 286.

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, his neo-paganism, 442, 451, 464, 467, 470; and see 39, 286, 363, 439. Quoted, 312.

Symonds, J. Addington, on 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 376, 429. Quoted, 100, 153, 162.

Symons, Arthur, quoted, 164, 172, 223.

'Symposium,' Plato's, 84, 85, 378, 424, 448–450; Shelley's translation, 448.

Taddeo Gaddi, 107, 114.

'Tears, Idle Tears,' Tennyson's, 5.

'Tempest, The,' Shakespeare's Caliban in, 67. Quoted, 68.

Tennyson, Alfred, his fame and Browning's, 3, 4, 5; his appearance, 6; contemporary criticism of, 160, 161; bad rhymes in 'In Memoriam,' 170; attitude towards Evolution, 322, 475; his profundity, 337; classical influence on, 363, 368, 440; less the poet of to-day than Browning, 406; the artist among Victorian poets, 476; and see 1, 17, 172, 249, 286, 290, 307, 308, 329, 388, 477, 478. Quoted, 126, 322, 323.

Thackeray, Miss Anne. See Mrs. Ritchie.

Thackeray, W. M., 37, 38, 285.

Theism, Christian, three elements of, 9–15; Browning's, 15–34; based

on two intuitions — God is Power, 16–21, God is Love, 21–26; relation and reconciliation of the two, 22, 26, 31, 33, 34; interest in the Incarnation, 25, 26, 241; Browning's optimism the result of his theism, 328; Euripides', as suggested in 'Aristophanes' Apology,' 425.
Theocritus, 363.
'Threnody,' Emerson's, 122.
'Through the Metidja,' the rhyme of, 165, 169.
'Tintern Abbey,' Wordsworth's, quoted, 315.
'Toccata of Galuppi's, A,' 52.
Transcendentalism, of the ancients, 392; Browning's, 396.
Translation, of Homer, inadequacy of all, 397, 401; Browning's ability in, 384, 386, 413, 429; and see 370.
Transliteration of Greek names, Browning's, 374.
Turgenieff, 37.
Turner, 396.
'Two in the Campagna,' 91, 484. Quoted, 92.
'Two Poets of Croisic, The,' 160, 173.
Tyndall, 1.
Verrall, Professor, on Euripides, 371, 372, 378, 380.
Victorian Age, criticism in the, 161; Greek spirit in the, 439, 451, 452; nature to the poets of the, 476, 477.
Virgil, 122, 155, 175, 363.
Voltaire, 160, 441.

Wagner, 396.
'Wanting is — What?' 478.
Whitman, Walt, 188.
Wordsworth, William, classed with Shelley and Browning, 39; Mill's recourse to the poetry of, 102, 320; his early critics, 153, 294; most personal and most impersonal of poets, 205; his optimism, 312–322: unconscious relation to nature, 313, 318; conscious love of nature, 314; revealed spiritual element in nature, 314–317; his power to change defeat into strength, 318, 319; tributes to his optimism, 320; on science and poetry, 321, 322; seldom treated Greek subjects, 440; rapture in his nature poetry, 473, 474; and see 1, 37, 56, 105, 203, 308, 445, 484. Quoted, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319, 322, 473.
'Worst of It, The,' 92. Quoted, 92.

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING.

A new and complete edition in nine volumes.
Crown octavo. Cloth. In box. Price, $20.00.

*** In addition to the matter heretofore included in the sixteen-volume edition, this contains Asolando, and Biographical and Historical Notes to the Poems by Robert Browning, making a *Complete Definitive Edition* of the poet's works.

This edition of Browning is extremely satisfactory, and is decidedly preferable to any other now existing. — *The Dial*, Chicago.

The volumes are of convenient size, are made to open easily without straining the binding, and for the popular use constitute the best edition of the poet yet published. — *Boston Evening Transcript.*

This edition has been eagerly waited for by thousands of the students of Browning, and it will satisfy all reasonable expectations. — *Boston Herald.*

To all who desire to save either money or shelf room in getting the best obtainable edition of Browning, this edition is to be warmly commended. — *Literary World.*

This is an admirable edition of the works of Browning, and puts into the hands of readers every facility for access to his works and for appreciation of it. — *The Outlook.*

The Poetical Works of Robert Browning.

A new edition in two volumes, uniform with the Globe Edition of the Poets. Crown 8vo. Cloth. Gilt top, in box. Price, $3.50.

Of the many editions of Browning we are quite willing to pin our faith to this one, and we can honestly recommend it — *N. Y. Home Journal.*

This Globe Edition leaves little, if anything, to be desired. — *Literary World.*

This edition is particularly desirable, as it is provided with brief prefatory notices to some of the longer poems, and explanatory notes by Mr. Augustine Birrell. — *Boston Budget.*

The edition is a complete one, containing all Browning's regularly published plays and poems, chronologically arranged, and will be a valuable addition to the libraries of his many admirers. — *N. Y. Observer.*

Take it all in all, it is the best edition of Browning for the money that we have ever seen. — *San Francisco Chronicle.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY,
66 FIFTH AVENUE,
New York.

DATE DUE

JUL 8 1989 STORAGE

NOV 2 3 2009

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

3 5132 00336 0013
University of the Pacific Library

Boston Browning Society.
The Boston Browning
Society papers.

PR
4229
B74

202674